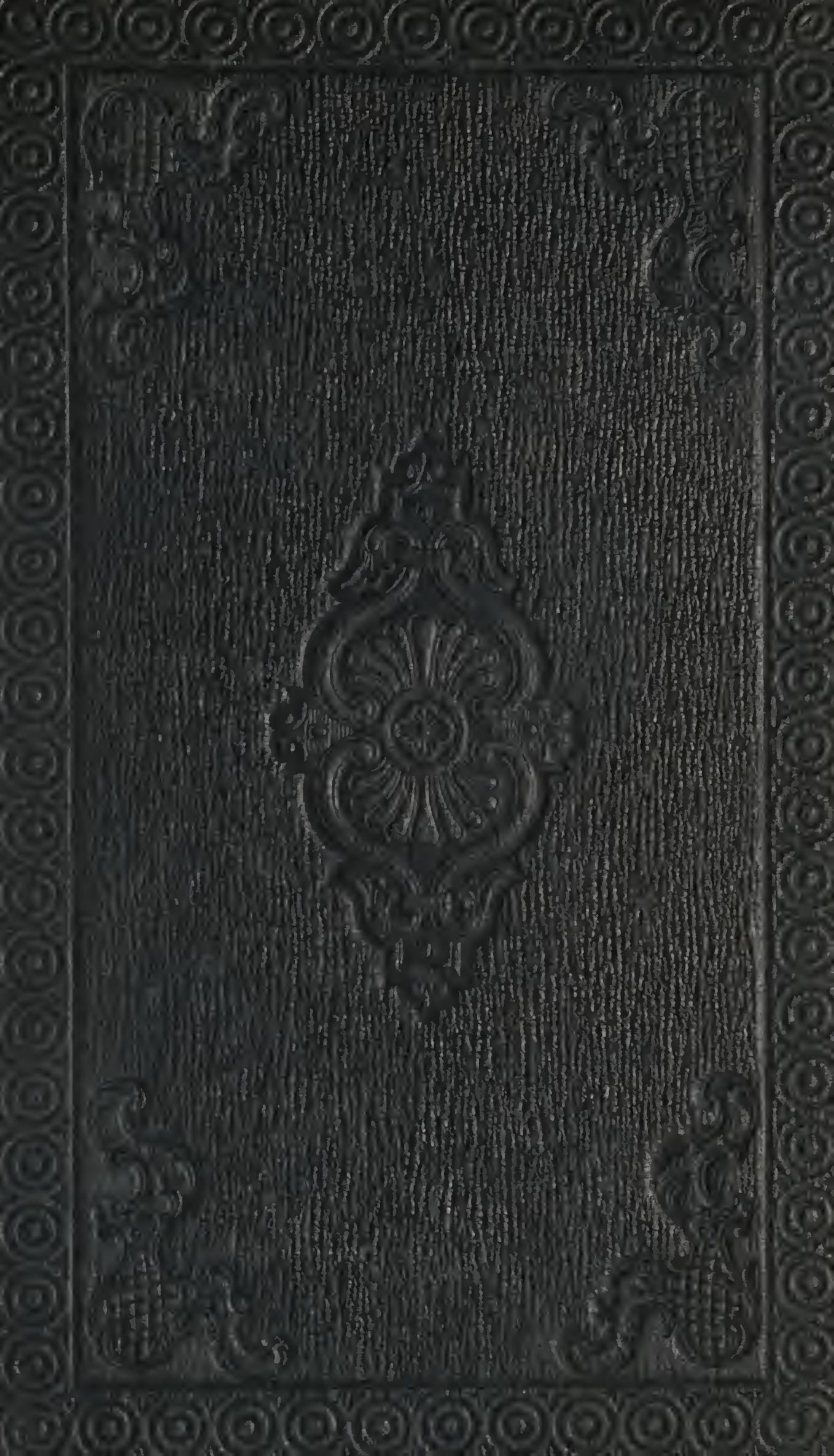

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THE

CHRISTIAN'S

DAILY TREASURY:

A

RELIGIOUS EXERCISE

FOR

EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR.

BY

EBENEZER TEMPLE,

AUTHOR OF "THE DOMESTIC ALTAR," ETC.

"The people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day."
"Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine."

BOSTON:

GOULD AND LINCOLN.

59 WASHINGTON STREET.

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PREFACE

TO THE

SECOND EDITION.

THE Author, in presenting to the public a Second Edition of "The Christian's Daily Treasury," cannot but feel gratified at the favorable reception which his work has met with. He hopes the many improvements he has endeavored to make in this Edition, in the way of style and arrangement, will still further recommend it to their notice. The religious sentiments and views of truth which the Work contains, he trusts, are in strict accordance with the statements of the Divine oracles. In the treatment of the various subjects, he has carefully endeavored to avoid every thing like a sectarian or party spirit. He has aimed, as well as he was able, to condense in each exercise the leading features and groundwork of a Sermon. In this respect it differs from the generality of works of a somewhat similar style already extant; as they, for the

most part, consist of reflections on a certain portion of Scripture; but this more particularly forms the outlines or materials for reflection and meditation. He hopes they will be found acceptable to the Christian, in his daily walk with God; to the heads of families, in conducting domestic worship; as a companion for the sick chamber; and, without any wish to assume too much, he would cherish the hope that they might be found useful to those who are just commencing the work of the ministry; or to lay-preachers, whose daily avocations preclude them from devoting much time to the study of sermons. To improve the present Edition, he has introduced two Indices—one consisting of an alphabetical arrangement of subjects, and the other an Index of Texts—which he hopes will be found useful.

"The Christian's Daily Treasury" is again presented to the candid reader, with sincere and earnest supplications to the King and Head of the Church, for a blessing on its contents; so that it may be what it is intended, a daily treasury for the Christian, out of which he may draw things new and old.

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The Christian's Daily Treasury.

January 1.

NEW-YEAR'S REFLECTIONS.

"Now they began on the first day of the first month to sanctify."—2 Chron. xxix. 17.

This chapter presents us with an historical account of many pleasing circumstances in the commencement of Hezekiah's reign. It was a time of reformation and sanctifying in the house of the Lord. We have here a great work, and the period of its performance. God is to be sanctified by us, in our thoughts, affections, plans, and purposes, and in all our ways. We are to sanctify his name, his day, his house, and ordinances. There is something peculiarly interesting in the beginning of a new year. Let us contemplate the manner in which it becomes us to enter upon it.

With unfeigned gratitude. A retrospect of past mercies, deliverances, and supports, will produce this. Therefore erect another "stone of remembrance" at this new stage of your journey, and exclaim, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

With self-examination. There are many who are conversant with the general subjects of religion, while they are strangers to their own hearts. They will, at particular seasons, balance their accounts, and endeavor to ascertain the state of their temporal concerns, while they feel no anxiety as to their spiritual condition. Bring your principles, views, feelings, and desires to the unerring test of God's word. Are you advancing in religion, or are you in a state of decay? Examine

—what have you learned, experienced, and enjoyed during the past year?

With greater circumspection. Wrong steps are sooner taken than retraced. Many eyes are upon us—a cloud of witnesses surround us—snares and temptations beset us, and everything urges the apostolic injunction, "See that ye walk circumspectly."

With renewed dedication. This act is first performed in conversion—but should be continually repeated. Let the Christian character be more fully exemplified in you.

With increasing zeal. We have much cause to take shame to ourselves that we have done so little in a work that deserves our highest regard, and demands our best energies.

"May we govern our passions with absolute sway,
And grow wiser and better as life wears away."

January 2.

DISCERNING TIME.

"A wise man's heart discerneth time."—Eccles. viii. 5.

How little are we impressed with the revolution of the seasons, and the rapid flight of time. Our years are so many stages in the journey of life. Each stage should be a time of solemn reflection. Observe in these words

The character described. "A wise man." Who is he? Not the man who grasps at a shadow instead of seizing the substance. Not the worldling, the covetous, the sensualist, but the Christian who is in the possession of true wisdom. Notice

Its discovery. It is seen in the choice he has made. He has chosen religion, and prefers its blessings to earth's highest pleasures. It is seen in the object he pursues. He treads in a peculiar path, and seeks that which dignifies and ennobles. It is seen in the destination to which he is bound. Does not he discover true wisdom

"Who scorns the trifles of a day
For joys that cannot fade away?"

Its source. It is derived, not from the learning of the schools, but from Him who is the fountain of wisdom. James

i. 5. It is obtained instrumentally from God's word, and efficiently from his Spirit.

Its excellence, namely, in its object and effect. Look at its tendency in life, in sorrow, in death, and in the final consummation of all things.

The discrimination possessed. The wise man's heart is enlightened by the Spirit, renewed by grace, and made a temple for Jehovah. It discerns

The swiftness of time. How rapid its motion! Our life is compared to a vapor, a swift ship, a watch in the night, a handbreadth, and is as nothing before God.

The ravages of time. The face of nature changes. What changes in kingdoms, churches, families, and individuals! Many show the ravages of time in their silvery locks, and furrowed cheeks.

The uncertainty of time. How many are hurried into eternity. Some are reminded by the inroads of disease; but death does not always warn before he strikes.

The value of time. See its value from its connection with futurity, and the end for which it was given. On the thread of human life our destinies for immortality are suspended. Let me then redeem the time, and employ it to the best of purposes, in making provision for eternity.

"The clock of time, how loud it strikes,
Its wheels, how swift they fly!
Its fingers, as they onward move,
Point to eternity."

January 3.

WALKING BEFORE GOD.

"I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living."—Psalm cxvi. 9.

This was a noble resolution, and well worthy an immortal being. Let us adopt it as our own. We are led from these words to consider the Christian's course.

In its peculiar nature. "I will walk before the Lord."

It is a walk of faith in God. Faith in the heart is always

connected with light in the mind. The exercise of faith, implies the possession of knowledge. There must be faith in the being, character, promise, and covenant of God, and in his Son.

It is a walk of communion with God. Union must exist before communion can be enjoyed. It is faith that unites us to God. You must walk with him, not only in public ordinances, but in private means.

It is a walk of dependence on God. How often do we lean on a broken reed instead of the Rock of Ages!

It is a walk of devotedness to God. It includes the surrender of the heart, the devotion of the soul, and the consecration of the life; and implies activity, and progression. But we may contemplate the Christian's course

In its particular scene. "In the land of the living." Because

Here the ordinances of religion are to be enjoyed. And only here. There are no ordinances in the grave. "Shall the dead praise thee?" There are no ordinances in hell; its inhabitants are beyond the reach of mercy. There are no ordinances in heaven, for there they need them not; they have obtained the end of their faith. Those who will not know God here in the riches of his grace, shall know him hereafter in the terrors of his justice.

Here the supplies of grace are to be afforded. And only here. In hell, there is a sea of wrath—in heaven, the river of life—on earth, the streams of grace.

Here the hopes of glory are cherished. And only here. In hell, amidst the vast expanse of dark despair, no ray of hope ever flashes, to lighten up the impervious gloom. In heaven, in the full blaze of fruition, the glimmerings of hope are lost; for what a man seeth why doth he yet hope for. The land of the living is the land of hope; let us then rejoice in its beams.

"O for a closer walk with God!
A calm and heavenly frame!
A light to shine upon the road
That leads me to the Lamb!"

January 4.

DIVINE DRAWING.

"I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee."—Jer. xxxi. 3.

We may as well attempt to measure the drops of water in the ocean, to enumerate the grains of sand on the shore, or to tell the stars that bespangle the firmament, as to estimate the extent of the love of God. Though we cannot fathom the depths of this mighty river, yet we may view and admire its streams as they roll on in their beauty and grandeur. This passage invites us to the contemplation of it. Note

The deed. "I have drawn thee." What is here said of ancient Israel is true of all believers.

From whence are they drawn? From a state of distance and alienation from God, from the friendship of the world, the love of sin, and the service of Satan.

To what are they drawn? To God as the fountain of all good, to Christ as the Mediator of the new covenant, to his house as the place where his honor dwelleth, to the throne of grace as the medium of spiritual blessings, to the sacramental table as the scene of their solemn vows, and to heaven as the consummation of all their desires.

The manner of its performance—"With loving-kindness;" or, as it is elsewhere expressed, "with the cords of a man, with bands of love." He does it in a way of kindness and affection, yet powerfully and effectually.

The source from whence it springs. "Everlasting love." This love is ancient in its existence, sovereign in its disposal, and eternal in its duration. Immutability is inscribed on the brow of Jehovah, but changeableness on man; while men are as shifting as the wind, he is as firm as a rock. Let your prayer be, "Draw me, and I will run after thee."

Though prone, alas, my roving heart,
From my Redeemer to depart,
And though I him have oft forgot,
His loving-kindness changes not.

January 5.

THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST.

"Abide with us."—Luke xxiv. 29.

Such was the language of the two disciples, going to Emmaus, to the Saviour, whom as yet they recognized not. The circumstances connected with this part of the history of Christ, are related in a most interesting manner, in the context. The desire they here express breathes the sentiments and feelings of every Christian's heart. Why is the presence of Christ sought after?

Because of the relief it affords. On earth we are called to pass through scenes of sorrow and suffering. What can administer such relief as the presence of Christ? If the exercise of mutual confidence between friend and friend, and the pouring out of the secret sorrows of our hearts tend so much to alleviate our pains and anxieties, how soothing to go and tell Jesus!

Because of the pleasure it yields. The disciples felt this, and they said, "Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way?" The presence of Christ is the very life of the soul. The world, the church, means, ordinances, the social circle, and the pious throng, are all a blank without it. It is the spring by which all our pleasing sensibilities and holy enjoyments are set in motion; the fountain from whence all the streams of our spiritual consolations flow; and the sun, whose bright beams and genial influence chase away the darkness from our minds, and impart new life and vigor to the soul.

Because of the effects it produces. Moses' face shone with such brilliancy when he came down from the mount, that the children of Israel could not look upon him, till he had put a veil on. So the believer, from the lofty elevation of communion with God, catches as it were a few rays of the Divine glory, which makes his face to shine; and when he descends, the blush of humility shades the brightness of his countenance, his joys are too big to be told, and the holy raptures of his soul are partially concealed. The effect is transforming, elevating, and enlivening.

Because of the prospects it unfolds. If relieved by the presence of Jesus while we live, we shall be refreshed by it when

we die. He will abide with us, not only in the morning of life, and in the heat and burden of the day, but when it is toward evening, and the shadows of death are around us,—his presence alone can penetrate the darkness of death, gild the sepulchre, and light us to glory. Who would not cry, O Saviour, abide with me!

January 6.

BEING FOUND IN CHRIST.

"And be found in him."—Phil. iii. 9.

This was Paul's desire, when he saw the excellency of the knowledge of Christ; and if we have had the same vision, we shall express the same wish. Observe the nature and blessedness of being found in Christ.

What is it to be found in Christ? It includes a personal interest in his atonement; and is opposed to a state of nature, which is described as being without Christ; a state of glory is to be with Christ; and a state of grace is to be in Christ.

It is to be in him as our Mediator to reconcile us to God; as our righteousness to justify our persons; as our sanctification to renew our nature; as our refuge to defend us from evil; and as our all-sufficient portion to supply all our wants.

What are the blessings connected with such a state? When faith lays her hand on the Bible, and says the pearl of great price is mine, I have found the Messiah, a voice echoes from the Divine oracles, "All things are yours." To be found in Christ, is to be found in his favor while we live; in the enjoyment of him when we die; acquitted in him in judgment, and in his presence in heaven. Is this our state? We may be found in all the forms of Christianity, in the temple, at the throne of grace, the family altar, the closet, the communion-table, and yet not be in Christ. What need is there for close examination!

O, keep me at thy sacred feet,
And let me rove no more.

January 7.

ACKNOWLEDGING GOD.

"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."—Prov. iii. 6.

The Bible contains doctrines on which to rest our faith, duties to regulate our conduct, and promises to refresh our spirits. Here is

An important precept.—The acknowledgment of the Divine Being in all our ways.

The Act. "Acknowledge him." This implies more than a belief in his existence. He is to be acknowledged in the affections of the heart; thus we are to love him; in the contemplation of the mind, thus we are to think on him; in the expressions of the lip, thus we are to confess him; in the deportment of the life, thus we are to glorify him.

The Extent. "In all thy ways." Your religion is not to be a Sunday dress, but a daily habit. You are to acknowledge God in all your religious duties. In the sanctuary, in the domestic circle, and in the closet of devotion. You are to acknowledge him in all your temporal concerns. Consult him in all your plans, purposes, and schemes. Acknowledge him in all your various trials. Remember he treads not in the track of human fitness or propriety. As a God of providence, his way is in the sea, too deep and mysterious for you to fathom; but as a God of grace, his way is in the sanctuary, and you may sit under its droppings, and commune with your God.

An invaluable promise. Assurance of Divine direction in our paths. If God is habitually acknowledged,

He will counsel you by his wisdom. How often do we consult the circle of friendship, rather than the throne of grace. Our future course is hidden from us; there may be many scenes of trial, sorrow, and difficulty, we have yet to pass, let us seek direction from Him who cannot err.

He will comfort you by his grace. God is not only the guide, but the companion of his people. Communion with him in the paths of life, while it throws a bright lustre around us, lights up a fire within, so that our hearts burn with a celestial glow. Thus while the fiery cloudy pillar is before us for our direction, the refreshing streams from the rock follow us in

our track, and a voice addresses us from above, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."

He will conduct you to glory. This is your destination. What a sublime course is the Christian's; though struggles attend its commencement, and trials follow in its progress, immortal joys and triumphs crown its end!

January 8.

COMFORT IN AFFLICTION.

"This is my comfort in my affliction; for thy word hath quickened me."
Psalm cxix. 50.

What a treasure is religion! When all human resources fail, this continues; when the streams of earthly comfort are dried up, this fountain still flows on; when worldly props are taken away, here we always have an arm to lean upon. The passage presents us with the result of the long experience of the man after God's own heart. Here we have the trials and the consolations of a believer.

His trials. "In my affliction." Every Christian has a thorn in the flesh, and peculiar trials concerning which he has to say, "my affliction." These may be either bodily, mental, or relative. They arise from many sources, are diversified in their character, various in their degrees, but are always sent for wise and gracious purposes.

His consolations. David's past experience of the comfort and quickening influence of the word, was his ground of support under present trials. Thus the believer is

Quickened to the discharge of Christian duties. We need quickening not only in, but after conversion; we feel the deadening influence of the world, and must acknowledge, that oftentimes when we ought to burn with ardor in the cause of the Redeemer, a chill comes over our spirits, and we find ourselves spell-bound by the chains of indifference. The word quickens us in prayer, and other religious exercises in which we engage.

Quickened in the exercise of the Christian graces. Has not our faith been strengthened, our hope revived, our love increased, our patience had its perfect work, and all the graces been made

to shine brighter in the dark night of affliction? When the grace of an afflicted saint is in exercise, his heart is like a garden of roses, which, the more they are moved and agitated, the sweeter is the fragrance they exhale. There is nothing of an earthly nature concerning which we can in truth say, "This is my comfort in my affliction."

January 9.

CHRIST THE FOUNDATION STONE.

"Behold I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded."—1 Pet. ii. 6.

The church may well be compared to a spiritual house, a magnificent building: Christ is the foundation, believers are the living stones, the Holy Spirit is the builder; and notwithstanding all the opposition manifested towards it, it shall rise higher and higher, till the top stone is brought, with shoutings, Grace, grace, unto it. Here we have

The character of the Saviour. He is designated a stone, denoting firmness, strength, and durability. This stone is laid for a foundation, not merely to be looked at, but built on. He is the chief corner-stone; that which unites and supports the whole building: Jew and Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free, are united in him. He is "elect;" chosen of the Father for this glorious design, as being possessed of every requisite. "Precious." Every excellence that can excite our admiration, or attract our love, is centered in him. Whatever view we take of him he is precious—in his person, work, fulness, gifts, and glories. Precious in the hopes he sets before us, the pleasures he imparts, the names he bears, the characters he sustains.

The work of the Father. On the erection of any building of importance, some person of distinction is selected to lay the foundation stone. Notice here

The Agent. "I lay." That is Jehovah himself—he who laid the foundations of the earth. Behold him laying it in the counsels of peace from eternity, in the promises, in the ceremonies of the Mosaic dispensation, in the visions of ancient prophecy, in the fulness of time.

The place. "In Sion," or the church of the living God. Where else should we look for it? "My kingdom," says the Saviour, "is not of this world." There is such a sacredness connected with religion that it refuses to mingle its glories with the perishing greatness of earthly things.

The attention demanded. "Behold," and wonder, admire, and rejoice.

THE DUTY OF THE SINNER. It is to come to this stone, and build on it, rejecting every other ground of hope. "To whom coming as unto a living stone."

THE SAFETY OF THE BELIEVER. He shall not be confounded by the temptations of Satan, the opposition of the wicked, the approach of death, or the transactions of the judgment-day.

January 10.

RECEIVING A KINGDOM.

"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."—Heb. xii. 28.

THE chapter out of which these words are selected, is one of the most sublime in the Bible. Here is a striking contrast drawn between the two dispensations,—the law is set forth in all its terrific grandeur, and the gospel in all its glorious grace. In the passage we have

CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGE ACKNOWLEDGED. Contemplate

Its nature. "A kingdom." It is widely different from the kingdoms of this world, being spiritual in its principles, and sacred in its interests. Of this kingdom, Christ is the Monarch, the heart is the throne, grace is the sceptre, the Bible is the law, and glory the end.

Its stability. "Which cannot be moved." This is in opposition to the passing away of the Old Testament dispensation. Its past stability is a pledge of its future endurance. The kingdom of Christ is firm, and shall continue the same in its character, principles, laws, constitution, privileges, and immunities. The lapse of time, the attacks of infidels, the rage of persecutors, and the malice of devils cannot move it.

How we become interested in it. "Receiving." When by faith we embrace Christ, we become members of this kingdom.

CHRISTIAN DUTY RECOMMENDED. Consider

What it includes. "Serving God." Our aim should be to do this acceptably: and the manner, "with reverence and godly fear." We must avoid the forwardness of presumption, and cultivate humility. Thus to serve God, is to yield ourselves implicitly to him.

What it requires. "Grace." It is not to be accomplished by natural ability. Without a new heart, we cannot have the disposition to serve God, and without grace we cannot have the power. *Where is it to be obtained?* "Let us have grace." The source is divine,—but the means are human. Seek it from him who is the God of all grace.

January 11.

SANCTIFICATION OF THE SABBATH.

"Keep the Sabbath-day to sanctify it."—Deut. v. 12.

MOSES in this chapter brings to the recollection of the Israelites what God had commanded them. We may take five views of the Sabbath.

IN ITS DIVINE ORIGIN. It is not an ordinance of man, but immediately appointed of God. Contemplate it under the Jewish Law. The first intimation we have of a Sabbath was, when God rested from his works at the creation. When Israel was organized as a nation, this was a statute; it occupies a place in the moral law. View it under the Christian Dispensation. The first day of the week is kept as the Lord's day, in commemoration of the Resurrection of Christ, he having finished a mightier and more stupendous work than that of creation. Contemplate the Sabbath

IN ITS HOLY REQUIREMENTS. There must be on our part, if we would keep it to sanctify it, a cessation from all worldly concerns, and an engagement in religious pursuits. It must be a day of remembrance—prayer—religious worship—meditation—holy desires—thanksgiving and joyful anticipation. Look at it

IN ITS IMPORTANT DESIGNS. The Almighty has instituted this

day for two grand objects, associated with his glory, and the welfare of his creatures, viz., the conversion of the impenitent, and the establishment of believers. Consider it

In its sacred delights. Sabbath days are golden days to the Christian. "'Tis then," says Mr. James, "that the Christian engaged in warfare with the world, like a conflicting vessel at sea, lies by for a season to repair the damages he has received, and prepare again for action, by renewing the faith which giveth him the victory." 'Tis on the Sabbath that piety, wearied and weakened by the wiles of her warfare, sits down to rest beneath the shadow of Christ's ordinances, and refreshing herself with the river of life which flows at her feet, rises with renovated strength to pursue her journey to a city of habitation. Finally, regard the Sabbath

In its typical representations. It is a fragment of heaven dropped upon earth. "There remaineth, therefore, a rest, or, as it is in the original, a Sabbath-keeping to the people of God."

January 12.

THE CHRISTIAN'S POSSESSIONS.

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things."—Rom. viii. 32.

This chapter is a compendium of the Gospel system, embracing doctrine, practice, and experience. The verse before us alludes to the astonishing exhibition of Divine love, not as a dark and doubtful point, but as established on undeniable authority, from which the most conclusive reasoning may be drawn. Observe

The ground of the Christian's hope. That is, the atonement of Christ.

The dignity of the sufferer. "His own Son." Think of him in his pre-existent glory, and his unrivalled excellences. Nothing of less worth could have atoned for sin, nothing of greater value could be given.

The nature of his sufferings. We cannot here enter into a minute detail, but must be content with a general view. It is said the Father did not spare him. He was not spared in Geth-

semane, at Pilate's bar, on Calvary. He was delivered up. To what? To that humanity in which Deity was enshrined, to poverty, reproach, and temptation; to his enemies, Judas, the chief priests, Herod, Pilate, the Roman soldiers, and to Divine wrath.

The individuals concerned. "For us all." All who feel their guilt and helplessness, and are crying for mercy; the weak and the strong, the desponding and joyful, the young and old. See the universality of the blessing.

THE EXTENT OF THE CHRISTIAN'S POSSESSIONS. God having given his Son, what will he withhold? Other blessings may be estimated, but the riches of Christ are unsearchable. Examine the catalogue, 1 Cor. iii. 21–23. The world is yours, not your home, your portion, your all: it is yours as conquered by faith, yours for present use, not for future inheritance; you have a better country. All things are for your sakes, subject to your real welfare! Pardon, holiness, comfort, joy; God and the creature, grace and glory, earth and heaven. But how are they bestowed? "Freely," and for the sake of Christ. Poor, indeed, are they who have not Christ, but unspeakably rich are those who are interested in him. They can boast in riches superior to all beneath the skies, and can more than vie with kings, and princes, and nobles.

January 13.

THE FULNESS OF CHRIST.

"For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell."—Col. i. 19.

IN the Scriptures of truth, in the history of the church, in the triumphs of heaven, and in the estimation of every believer, "Christ is all." All our hopes are in him, all our desires are towards him, and all our comforts are derived from him. Let us contemplate

THE FULNESS OF CHRIST. He has a fulness essential to him as God: and a fulness treasured up in him as Mediator. In the contemplation of the fulness of Christ, we are, as it were, standing on the banks of a mighty river, whose streams are incessantly rolling on, and as we cannot count the particles of the

watery element that pass before us, so we can form no adequate idea of those inestimable blessings that flow from Christ.

A fulness of wisdom for our instruction. By nature the understanding is dark; the lamp of human reason, however carefully trimmed, will, at its greatest height, give but a faint and dim light,—one beam of the Sun of righteousness darting into the soul, will discover more to it than reason ever could do, and "give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ."

A fulness of merit for our redemption. Enslaved as we are by sin and Satan, we need a Redeemer. In the person of Christ we have one who is mighty to save. The sacrifice he presented was full and complete, answering every purpose it was designed to accomplish. It is "all fulness" that dwells in him. There are all spiritual blessings, for all descriptions of sinners.

A fulness of power for our support. There is might and mercy, glory and grace, power and piety, combined in him. Our condition is one of helplessness and weakness, but Christ is our strength. In him there is power for our support, as well as grace for our salvation.

A fulness of grace for our final happiness. He is full of grace and truth. Here is a Divine treasury that can never be exhausted; millions have been supplied from this storehouse, yet there is no diminution, for still in him all fulness dwells. May the Almighty enable us on the one hand to see the emptiness of the world, and on the other, the fulness of Christ: and receive of his fulness, and grace for grace.

January 14.

THE PLEASURE OF THE FATHER.

"For it pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell."—Col. i. 19.

SALVATION is to be viewed as the glorious work of a Triune Jehovah. Its contrivance is ascribed to the wisdom of the Father, its execution to the love of the Son, and its application to the grace of the Spirit. With regard to the fulness of Christ, let us contemplate

The pleasure of the Father. "It pleased the Father." It was his will, and by his appointment. But why?

For the display of the Divine glory. In the varied works of the Almighty that we behold around us, we have, as it were, detached exhibitions of the light of his glorious perfections; but in the scheme of salvation, all the Divine attributes shine forth in one splendid constellation, presenting the Deity to our view in such a manner as cannot fail to excite our admiration, love, and praise. The fulness of Christ redounds to the glory of God: and thus the Cross becomes a mirror, reflecting back again to the great Eternal the overflowings of his mercy, the firmness of his truth, the purity of his holiness, and the plenitude of his grace.

For the accomplishment of human redemption. Thus it is said, "It pleased the Father to bruise him." The pleasure was not in the act, but in the result of his sufferings. It pleases the Father when sinners come and enlist under the banners of the cross; when those who are impoverished by sin seek the unsearchable riches of Christ; when the miserable come for happiness, and the despairing for hope, and the graceless for grace. But he declares, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." Take encouragement, therefore, from the complacency of the Father, and be it your highest aim and chief desire, to escape the tempests of his wrath, to dread the clouds of his displeasure, and to enjoy the sunshine of his favor.

January 15.

THE DUTY OF THE SINNER.

"For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell."—Col. i. 19.

The fulness of Christ is not like a concealed spring, or a fountain shut up, but like a wide expansive ocean, free and open for all; we are soon lost in the contemplation of its vastness, and filled with unutterable joy when we can dive into its depths, and revive and invigorate our languid souls. Let us consider in relation to the fulness of Christ,

The duty of the sinner. There must be

An humble acknowledgment of our wants. This is the first

step to get them supplied. We cannot rejoice in Christ's fulness if we have not mourned over our own emptiness. Yet such is the delusion of thousands, that they imagine they are rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; while they are reduced to the lowest state of spiritual destitution and wretchedness.

A sincere delight in his fulness. As it pleases the Father, so let it delight you, that all fulness dwells in Christ. When you contemplate the rich stores that are treasured up in him, and adapted exactly to your spiritual necessities, do not emotions of joy and gratitude thrill through your soul, that such a resource is opened?

A cordial reception of his benefits. Many hear of the Saviour's treasures who have never received of his fulness. If we would experience the Divine blessing and favor, we must be partakers of the Divine nature. Nothing short of the saving application of Christ's fulness to the soul will impart real satisfaction. Let my prayer be, Blessed God, supply all my wants according to thy riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Which of all our friends, to save us,
Could or would have shed their blood?
But one Jesus died to have us,
Reconciled in him to God;
This was boundless love indeed!
Jesus is a friend in need.

January 16.

THE POOR IN SPIRIT.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."—Matt. v. 3.

This is the first sentence in that memorable sermon which our Lord delivered on the mount. Note

The character. "The poor in spirit." Such an one has

A low opinion of himself. The high and lofty looks are brought down, the proud spirit is broken. We can never rise in the favor of God till we sink in our own estimation. Henry observes, "Those who would build high must begin low." It is with Christians as with a vessel, the more it fills the deeper it sinks.

Exalted views of Christ. We are saved and sanctified, enriched and ennobled by him. As a sight of the deformity of sins lays the proudest rebel low; so a sense of salvation by grace, makes the highest saint humble.

A contented disposition with his lot. The world must be regarded as the scene of our journey, not the seat of our rest. The traveller makes use of the accommodation which the inn affords, not to divert him from, but to refresh and prepare him for his journey: the comforts he obtains on the way will not satisfy him without going home. Just so is it with the Christian; he exclaims concerning temporal comforts, and agreeable connections,

"Thanks to thy name for meaner things,
But these are not my God."

THE BLESSING. "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven," that is, they are interested in all the blessings of the gospel dispensation.

He will enrich them with his grace. Nothing but this can adorn the soul, or rejoice the heart.

He will receive them into glory. They shall be exalted in due time beyond the reach of every evil. Heaven is theirs by promise, title, earnest, and foretaste, and ere long it shall be theirs by possession. Let me cultivate this poverty of spirit, and thereby become a possessor of the Christian's rich inheritance.

January 17.

FERVOR IN RELIGION.

"Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord."—Rom. xii. 11.

THE Christian should possess an active spirit, for both worlds have a claim on him. He has to exercise himself in duties secular, social, and sacred. Here is

AN EVIL TO AVOID. It is slothfulness. God has wisely ordained that we should have various pursuits and occupations while in this world. The indolent are exposed to a thousand temptations, which an active man knows nothing of. An idler,

whose time hangs heavy on his hands, and who is a burden to himself, confirms the truth of the sentiment,

"Absence of occupation is not rest,
A mind quite vacant is a mind distress'd."

A WORK TO PERFORM.—"Serving the Lord." The Christian is to walk with God in his daily avocations, and in the midst of his secular affairs. What is included in serving the Lord? It is to give up ourselves to his disposal, live in his fear, walk in his commandments, and aim at his glory. He is to be served with a sincere heart, an unshaken resolution, and a willing mind.

A SPIRIT TO CHERISH. "Fervent in spirit." True fervor is not an occasional, but a continued feeling; it is not like a sudden glare produced by ignited straw, which however bright is soon extinguished; but like the lamp in the sacred temple which burnt with a steady flame. It is not like a rushing torrent, which, though it may spread far and wide at the same time, yet soon subsides; but like the streams issuing from a perennial fountain. There must be on our part a diligent improvement of the graces of the Spirit, and an active performance of the duties of religion.

'Tis to my Saviour I would live—
To him who for my ransom died;
Nor could all worldly honor give
Such bliss as crowns me at his side.

January 18.

CHRIST'S ATONEMENT AND INTERCESSION.

"He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."—Isa. liii. 12.

THE chapter of which these words form a part, presents us with a clear and comprehensive view of the sufferings, death, and atonement of Christ; and the closing verse, of his intercession. Observe

THE CHARACTER OF MANKIND. "Transgressors." This is proved from

The testimony of Scripture. We are called transgressors

from the womb. The heart is deceitful, the thoughts evil, the imaginations corrupt, the mind benighted, the affections earthly, and the members of the body the ready instruments of unrighteousness.

The experience of the penitent. The publican smote upon his breast, as if he had said, here is the source of all my depravity, the fountain from whence the streams of corruption flow, and cried "God be merciful to me a sinner." You remember the language of the prodigal.

The conscience of the wicked. Conscience is the voice of God in the soul, and when it speaks aloud, and sends forth its sharp arrows, what pain and remorse are felt. See it in Cain, Joseph's brethren, Belshazzar, the accusers of the adulterous woman, Judas, Felix, and others.

The work of Christ. It is twofold:

Atonement. "He bare the sin of many." This includes both original sin and actual transgression. No mere creature could present an all-sufficient atonement, and satisfy the claims of justice: our Redeemer did it, being equal with God.

Intercession. "And made intercession for the transgressors." As an Intercessor he is the Surety of his people, presents his sacrifice, meets the accusations of Satan, the claims of conscience, and the corruptions of the heart. He intercedes for their pardon, sanctification, the operations of his Spirit, and their final glorification.

January 19.

A RESOURCE IN TROUBLE.

"Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Psalm l. 15.

The promises of God are precious in their nature, extensive in their application, and certain in their fulfilment. Mr. Newton beautifully remarks,—"The firmament of revelation is spangled with exceeding great and precious promises, as the sky is with stars; but their value and beauty are most perceptible to us in the night of affliction." Let us look at the one before us.

A DISTRESSING PERIOD. "The day of trouble." We cannot expect uninterrupted sunshine; we must look for dark and cloudy days. There are many things that tend to trouble and perplex the Christian.

A KIND DIRECTION. "Call upon me." This is not the language of the world. How many professed friends have their hearts, hands, and houses open to receive the sons of prosperity, while they are all shut against the children of adversity. Not so with our best Friend; he is willing to receive us under a cloud, and gild that cloud with an assurance of his love and favor. It is well when our troubles lead us to, rather than from God. Call upon him in the language of prayer, with thankfulness for past favors, and in the exercise of Christian submission to his will.

A GRACIOUS PROMISE. "I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."

Deliverance shall come from God. This shall be accomplished in his own time, by his own means, and in his own way.

Glory shall redound to God. "We must go to God," says Henry, "with prayers when we are afflicted, and with praises when we are delivered." Let us be thankful, that in the wilderness we not only have the waters of affliction, but the streams of comfort.

January 20.

PRACTICAL RELIGION.

"Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long."—Prov. xxiii. 17.

RELIGION holds its seat in the heart, and sheds its heavenly influence in the life. It is a governing principle, and where divinely instilled, will obtain the ascendency over the sinful and corrupt passions of the mind. The passage gives us a fine view of religion in its practical tendency, bearing on the scenes and circumstances of every day. Observe concerning this duty

THE MANNER IN WHICH IT IS TO BE PERFORMED. It includes

The habitual recognition of the Divine presence. There may be an occasional acknowledgment of it, where these feelings

are by no means habitual. Many express a temporary awe of God in a thunder-storm, who forget Him when all nature is tranquil and serene. As the lightning quickly flashes along the skies, as the rolling thunder soon dies on the ear, and the clouds are rapidly dispersed, so transient is the effect produced on their minds.

A cheerful submission to the Divine will. God is to be recognized in the duties, trials, and disappointments, as well as the comforts and mercies of the day.

A continual devotedness to the Divine glory. The Christian's is to be, not a sudden start, and then a halt, but a steady, persevering course.

THE MOTIVES BY WHICH IT MAY BE URGED. You should cultivate this habitual principle of fear, to testify your gratitude, to show your obedience, to evince your sincerity, and to secure your welfare. Such a course is pleasing to God, honorable to your profession, unanswerable to your opponents, and encouraging to your companions.

The Saviour bids us watch and pray,
Maintain a warrior's strife;
Help, Lord, to hear thy voice to-day;
Obedience is our life.

January 21.

THE WELLS OF SALVATION.

"Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."—Isa. xii. 3.

THE Bible abounds with figurative language, and metaphorical representations. The blessings of salvation are frequently compared to water. Thus we read of rivers, fountains, streams, living waters, and wells; all to set forth the cleansing, reviving and elevating nature, and the inexhaustible fulness of these blessings. Let us look at

THE WELLS OF SALVATION. What is meant by them?

The eternal love of God. It reaches from everlasting to everlasting in its length; it extends to men of every clime, and alike encircles Jew and Gentile, such is its width; it reaches the lowest shades of misery and despair, such is its depth; and

it conducts to the full enjoyment of God in heaven, such is its height.

The gracious mediation of Christ. To use the language of Dr. Chalmers, this throws an archway of communication between the realms of sense and spirit,—it is the mystic ladder which conducts man to the altitude of the eternal and immutable God. By the doctrine of the incarnation he is pictured to the world with a human countenance, heard in a human voice, and seen in the deeds and footsteps of a human history.

The sacred influences of the Spirit. 'Tis he alone that can illumine the understanding, soften the heart, and sanctify the soul. His operations are mysterious in their manner, wonderful in their nature, extensive in their range, effectual in their power, and glorious in their effects.

The precious promises of the Gospel. The promises of God are all sure, though not dated; this exercises faith, induces hope, and excites to prayer.

We have seen what these wells are, now let us notice

THE CHRISTIAN'S BLESSED EMPLOYMENT. He draws water. *By what means?* In the exercise of meditation. This is highly conducive not only to the formation of our Christian character, but to the promotion of our spiritual comfort and prosperity. By reading the Scriptures, many have drawn the sweetest consolations from the wells of salvation. By prayer, which is the golden key that unlocks the treasures of heaven. All this must be done in faith, and with a dependence on his grace.

In what manner? "With joy." Joy because of the very nature of the blessings he derives; they are soul-reviving and refreshing. Joy because of their freeness. The wells are open to all who will draw from them. Joy because of their inexhaustible fulness. They may be compared to a vast ocean, incessantly rolling its billows, without finding bottom or shore—or to eternity itself,—without exhaustion, without diminution, without end. Let me often be found beside these wells, with the sentiment of the poet,—

> "Lord, I am come to seek supplies
> And drive my wants away."

January 22.

TRUST IN GOD.

"Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass." Psalm xxxvii. 5.

The disciple of Christ learns some of the best lessons in the school of adversity. David enjoyed some of his happiest seasons, and acquired his richest experience here. Observe

What the Christian is to do in reference to God. He is to commit his way unto the Lord, and trust in his wisdom to guide him; the duties of the way, and trust in his strength to perform them; the temptations of the way, and trust in his grace for succor; the trials of the way, and trust in his power to sustain him; the reproaches of the way, and trust in his promise to cast them off; the doubts of the way, and trust in his mercy to dispel them; the mysteries of the way, and trust in his skill to explain them.

What God has promised to do for the Christian. "He shall bring it to pass;" that is, he will afford seasonable deliverance, wise direction, and ample support.

Let us believe and take courage. Every word he has spoken, and every promise he has made, shall be brought to pass. We must look through the anger of God's correction to the sweetness of his countenance; as by a rainbow we see the beautiful image of the sun's light, in the midst of a dark and watery cloud.

Let us wait and adore. All this he will do in his own time and in his own way.

January 23.

THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT.

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever."—John xiv. 16.

When our Saviour uttered these words, it was a critical and trying period for his disciples. Perilous times were approaching, dark clouds were gathering around them, but they had no just

grounds for terror and dismay. Though they were soon to be deprived of his bodily presence, they would not be left comfortless; he here promises them a rich gift, it is the Spirit. Observe here

THE MANNER IN WHICH HE IS GIVEN. We may consider the Spirit

As the fruit of the Saviour's intercession. "I will pray the Father." He is our Advocate; and but for him we should know nothing either of the work or influences of the Spirit.

As the gift of the Father's love. "And he shall give you another Comforter." He is the Author of every good and perfect gift.

THE ENDS FOR WHICH HE IS BESTOWED. As a Comforter. The original word signifies also an Advocate and Instructor. Thus he is given not only to administer comfort, but to impart knowledge. Now let us consider him

As a comforter under trials. This he does by sanctifying our afflictions, by applying the promises to our particular cases, and by enabling us to cast our cares upon him. He has not promised to remove our burdens, but to sustain us under them.

As a helper in prayer. He leads us into all truth. There are three great impediments to prayer: a dark understanding, a guilty conscience, and a cold heart. The Spirit assists us, by imparting light to the mind,—conveying peace to the conscience,—and expanding the desires of our heart. Without the Spirit's influence there is neither life, power, nor efficacy in prayer. It is like a body without a soul, a firmament without a sun: incense without odor, a ship without sails, and a sacrifice without fire.

THE PERIOD FOR WHICH HE IS ENJOYED. "That he may abide with you forever." "All earthly joys," says Burkitt, "are sudden flashes, not lasting flames." Here are everlasting consolations. The Spirit comes not as a transient visitor, but as a permanent guest.

How great is the blessing here set before us. If the Spirit is given to us, all things are ours, and we are Christ's. But "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his."

Blessed Comforter, come down,
  And live and move in me;
Make my every deed thine own,
  In all things led by thee.

January 24.

BELIEVERS LED BY THE SPIRIT.

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."—Rom. viii. 14.

This chapter contains some of the deep things of God; the mysteries of our holy religion. I have somewhere met with a beautiful sentiment, in substance as follows:—The Gospel condescends to argue and reason on some of its truths, but not on others; they are the topmost boughs of the tree of life, whose fruits are apparent to us, but not their relation, and the ground of their fitness and propriety,—they must be received on the veracity of their Author. The passage before us is plain and simple, and leads us to take two views of believers.

Their peculiarity. "*As many* as are led by the Spirit of God." This implies that all are not led by Him. Some are led by another spirit, that of the world. But Christians are led by the Spirit of God into the way of truth. They are led, not driven,—sweetly inclined, not forced. They have a pliable, tender, and humble spirit. They are led in the path of duty,—the Spirit leads them to the Cross, the throne of grace, the wells of salvation, and to the performance of relative as well as religious duties. They are led into the pleasures of holiness, and finally to the glories of heaven. But mark

Their privilege. "They are the sons of God." Adoption is spiritual in its character,—being connected with spiritual objects, desires, and associations; as it concerns the spiritual part of our nature, and as it is the peculiar work of the Spirit. It is extensive in its nature. It is not a nominal privilege, or an empty title; "if children, then heirs." The riches and titles of this world do not always go together; but they do here. It is eternal in its duration. God does not adopt children into his family, and then discard them. The child of God may be cast down, but he cannot be cast off.

Whene'er temptations lure my heart,
Or draw my feet aside,
My God, thy powerful aid impart,
My Guardian and my Guide.

January 25.

THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS.

"He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true."—John iii. 33.

This was the language of John respecting the Saviour. He discovered a noble spirit, devoid of everything like envy and jealousy, when he exclaimed, "He must increase, but I must decrease." So it is with the morning star; it shines brightly till the sun rises, but when his beams reach our horizon, it is eclipsed by the superior lustre of the luminary of day. Let us consider the testimony of Jesus in three points of view.

As recorded. But where? In the Bible. Note

The excellency of its matter. It relates to subjects of the most solemn and sublime character, the nature, perfections, and government of God, and the condition, duties, and destinies of man.

The evidence of its truth. It is not a mere unauthenticated report, but a testimony supported by the most undeniable evidence; Jesus presented his Divine credentials, and confirmed his testimony by signs and wonders.

As received. It is said, "No man receiveth his testimony;" that is, but few, in comparison with those who reject it. It implies

A candid hearing. This the Gospel demands at our hands. Everything in religion is open and fair, it invites us to "come and see," and courts our investigation: but many reject it from the power of prejudice.

A firm belief. It must have your full credence, as that which is of infinite moment to your best interests.

A cordial reception. And this must be entire in its nature, sincere in its principle, practical in its tendency, and pleasing in its results.

As confirmed. We subscribe to certain agreements by signing our hand, and setting our seal. To this, allusion is here made. Look at the substance of this testimony. "God is true." Everything around us tends to confirm this. He is so in his covenant engagements, purposes, and promises. The manner of it is strikingly expressed—"Hath set to his seal," as a solemn and deliberate act. Martyrs did it with their blood, but this is

not required of us. The importance of it will appear, if we consider that it tends to God's honor, our own satisfaction, and the encouragement of others.

January 26.

PARDON OF SIN.

"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."—Isa. xliii. 25.

How wonderfully is the patience of God displayed towards man. The history of the world presents us with a black picture of man's crimes, and a glowing representation of God's mercies. In the context we see how his forbearance was exercised towards Israel. They were a stiff-necked people, but he had a tender heart: they made him to serve with their sins, but he restrained his judgments; they wearied him with iniquity, but he loaded them with his mercy, they obliterated his testimonies, but he promised to blot out their transgressions. Here we have

An affecting truth implied. God takes notice of the sins we commit.

They are recorded. Thus he promises to blot them out. "The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond." This is true of all our sins; they are written with the finger of God, in the book of his omniscience.

They are remembered. We may soon forget the particular scenes and circumstances under which they were committed, but it is not so with God. They are remembered against us as debts.

An encouraging declaration made.

The act. It is the blotting out of sin. The record is made in such durable characters that nothing but the blood of Christ can erase it.

The Agent. The Almighty claims this prerogative. As if he had said, it is I, even I, whom you have offended—let this therefore excite your wonder. It is I, even I, who have power to do it, therefore let this inspire your confidence. It is I,

even I, who am willing to do it, therefore let this encourage your hope.

The ground. What is the principle on which it is bestowed? "For mine own sake." For the sake of his great name, his amazing love, his beloved Son. How delightful are the feelings with which this blessing is associated! The troubled soul, when its pardon is sealed, enjoys a sweet serenity within, like the mighty ocean in a calm, reflecting without a rippled wave the bright and azure sky.

January 27.

THE CHIEF SHEPHERD.

"And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."—1 Pet. v. 4.

This passage refers principally to ministers, but will apply to all believers. Mark

The illustrious character introduced. "The chief Shepherd;" that is, the Lord Jesus Christ. Think of

The interest he takes in his flock. He makes them to lie down in the green pastures of Divine ordinances, leads them beside the still waters of the sanctuary, and takes an interest in all that concerns them.

The patience he exercises. When the sheep wander from his fold, how he bears with their infirmities, and brings them back again.

The superiority he claims. There are many under-shepherds whom he employs, but he is designated by way of eminence the chief Shepherd; all others are his servants, act under his direction, and bow to his authority.

The future appearance expected. There are several appearances he has already made. He appeared to our forefathers as the angel of the covenant, and in human flesh, in the fulness of time; he now appears in the ministry of the Gospel and the influence of his Spirit; he shall appear at death to conduct his flock safely over Jordan's streams into Canaan's happy land, where he shall feed them and lead them by living fountains of waters; and he shall appear at the last day in glory and majesty, to judge the world in righteousness.

The glorious reward anticipated. "A crown of glory that fadeth not away." A crown, unlike the garlands presented to the successful racer or wrestler in the Grecian games, which were made of dying leaves, and soon lost their beauty. This is a purchased crown. By sin the crown has fallen from our heads, by grace it is restored. An unmerited crown. The believer's is not a hard-earned living, but an inheritance. He deserved the curse rather than the crown. A splendid crown. A crown of glory. No stain can tarnish its lustre, no imperfection diminish its worth. A crown unattended with cares. Earthly crowns often sit uneasy on the brow of the monarch, vexations attend royalty, and misery is found in a palace. An incorruptible crown. It fadeth not away. Be it my highest ambition to wear it.

January 28.

FOLLOWING GOD.

"Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children."—Eph. v. 1.

The Scriptures present us with some bright examples of piety and devotedness to God, worthy our imitation; but we are only to follow them as far as they followed God. The Almighty himself is our high and exalted pattern. Two things may be here remarked respecting believers.

The high character they sustain. "Dear children." This is expressive of

Intimate relationship. They are God's children in a peculiar sense, by adopting mercy and regenerating grace. It is a relation of high honor, extensive wealth, exalted privileges, and glorious expectations.

Tender affection. "Dear children." They are dear to the Father; he has their names engraven in his hand, and on his heart. Dear to the Son. The sufferings he endured and the death he died, prove this. Dear to the Spirit. He has illumined, quickened, comforted, and sealed them to the day of redemption. Dear to each other, as members of the same body, children of the same parent, partakers of the same na-

ture, sharers of the same privileges, and destined to the same honors.

The particular conduct they are to exhibit. "Followers of God." What a model for our imitation! Of course, it is in a subordinate sense we are to be followers of him. Let us select some of the Divine perfections, to which this Christian duty will apply—wisdom, purity, truth, and love. We are to be followers of the wisdom of God, by a search after Divine knowledge; of the purity of God, by aiming after true holiness; of the truth of God, by the display of an upright conduct; and of the love of God, by the exercise of kind dispositions.

"Unsullied meekness, truth and love,
Through all thy conduct shine;
O may my whole deportment prove
A copy, Lord, of thine."

January 29.

EXALTING GOD.

"Thou art my God, I will exalt thee."—Psalm cxviii. 28.

Believers are similar in their views and feelings, pleasures and pursuits, hopes and fears, and in their language; they all speak the same thing. The sentiment before us expresses the feeling of every believer's heart. Here is

A solemn declaration. "Thou art my God." So says the miser to his gold, so the epicure to his luxurious delicacies, the drunkard to the intoxicating draught, the voluptuary to his pleasures. So says the Christian to his Maker. This is the language of strong faith, deep humility, great wonder, and unspeakable joy. It has been well remarked, if we would not have the ivy to creep on the ground, we must erect an object which it can embrace, and by embracing, ascend; and if we would detach the heart from embracing the dust, we must give to it another and a nobler object. Such an one is the Christian's.

A noble resolution. "I will exalt thee." We cannot make God more glorious than he is, for he is exalted above all blessing and praise.

Exalt him in the heart, by yielding to him your powers and faculties. He is to be exalted in the thoughts, affections, desires and purposes of the heart.

Exalt him with your tongue by showing forth his praise. All his works praise him; and shall man alone be silent? The planetary system, in order, majesty, and glory, the cattle upon a thousand hills, the myriads of fish in the mighty ocean, the winged tribes that are found in the wide expanse of the aërial regions, cherubim and seraphim, that bow before the throne, and all the angelic hosts and glorified spirits in the heaven of heavens, utter one voice, and it is the sound of praise. Exalt him by speaking to him in prayer, of him in praise, and for him in a way of recommendation.

Exalt him in your conduct by living to his glory. Thus you are to hold forth the word of life, by a becoming spirit, a holy carriage, and a consistent course. Be this my daily, hourly work; and may my heart, like a well-tuned instrument, resound his praise.

"O may I breathe no longer than I breathe
My soul in praise to Him who gave my soul."

January 30.

BELIEVERS' TITLES.

"Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling."—Heb. iii. 1.

THE Apostle is here speaking of believers; how beautiful and striking the description he gives of them! Observe

THE DIGNIFIED APPELLATION.—He calls them

Brethren. The church of God is a family; united, happy, spiritual, peaceful, and honorable. It is now divided; part is in heaven and part on earth. Christians are assimilated to the same likeness, interested in the same righteousness, animated by the same affection, guided by the same rules, destined to the same home. He styles them

Holy. They are set apart for holy purposes, possessed of holy qualities, influenced by holy motives, partakers of holy joys, and bound for a holy place. Their principles, dispo-

sitions, secret thoughts, and the development of their character, are connected with holiness. He speaks of them as

Partakers of the heavenly calling. Contemplate its nature; it is the calling of the Spirit, addressed to the heart. It is a sovereign, honorable, and high calling. Consider its property, "heavenly." In its origin, efficacy, tendency, and termination, it is heavenly. Look at its participation, believers are "partakers" of it. This is something more than a profession. Religion is personal and experimental in its character. Am I a partaker of it? Do I feel heaven begun in my heart? Aspire, my soul, to this honor; see the world's vanity, emptiness, and delusions. Were every dew-drop a diamond, every atom a world, and every world filled with gold, all would not satisfy the boundless desires of the immortal soul.

How blest the sacred tie that binds,
In sweet communion, kindred minds!
How swift the heavenly course they run,
Whose hearts, whose faith, whose hopes are one!

To each the soul of each how dear!
What tender love, what holy fear!
How doth the generous flame within
Refine from earth, and cleanse from sin!

Nor shall the glowing flame expire,
When dimly burns frail nature's fire;
Then shall they meet in realms above,
A heaven of joy, a heaven of love.

January 31.

THE CONTEMPLATION OF CHRIST.

"Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."—Heb. iii. 1.

NATURE presents us with a lovely mirror, in which we see much of God in his nature and perfections; but the view is contracted, when compared with the brighter exhibition furnished in the glass of the Gospel, where his whole name appears complete, and his attributes shine with a united, harmonious and magnificent splendor. The glory of God is best seen in the face of Christ. Here is

A GLORIOUS SUBJECT. "The Apostle and High Priest of

our profession, Christ Jesus." Look at the terms which Paul uses in speaking of the Saviour: "The Apostle," that is, one sent of God. Jesus was sent on a glorious work, involving the endless happiness of millions of the human race. "The High Priest of our profession." Our profession, if we are true Christians, is a holy, honorable, solemn, and sacred one; and Jesus, as our High Priest, has made an atonement, and is now interceding for his people. They are priests, but He is the High Priest; they offer sacrifices, but he presents them to the Father. As an Apostle he was superior to Moses, and as an High Priest greater than Aaron. The design of the Epistle to the Hebrews is to prove this.

A SOLEMN INJUNCTION. "Consider" his pre-existent glory, his sovereign grace, his matchless excellences, and his boundless dominion. Consider the scenes of his life, the severity of his sufferings, the circumstances of his death, the triumph of his resurrection and ascension, and the magnitude of his work. Consider the example he has left, the ordinances he has enjoined, and the privileges he has entailed on his people. Wrapt in a contemplation so glorious, brighter beams than those of the natural sun shall irradiate your path; instead of the desolating tempest, you shall have the refreshing shower; sweet and fragrant flowers shall be seen here and there, among the thorns and briers of the wilderness. Jordan's streams shall not ingulf you, for your High Priest has gone before, and is waiting to welcome you on the peaceful shores of the celestial Canaan. Will you not consider Him?

February I.

GOD'S CHILDREN.

"All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children."—Isa. liv. 13.

WHAT glorious things are spoken of Zion! her enemies shall be confounded, her friends exalted, her subjects increased, and her God glorified. Our text is one out of a rich cluster of promises respecting the prosperity of the church. Let us contemplate believers in three ways.

The character they bear. They are God's children. Observe

The change they experience. It is a radical change, the heart being the subject of it. They are born again, renovated by Divine grace, created anew in Christ.

The conduct they display. They have the feelings and dispositions of children, and yield a dutiful obedience to the Divine commands.

The glories they anticipate. Being children, they become heirs. They have much in possession, and more in prospect. By the designation of children, we are reminded of their present imperfections. They are children in knowledge, grace, and holiness; but soon they shall attain to the stature of a perfect man.

The instructions they receive. They are taught of the Lord. The lessons are important, the means are simple, and the Teacher is Divine. The best lessons are learnt, not in the schools of the philosopher, but at the feet of Jesus.

The blessings they enjoy. "Great shall be the peace of thy children." There is the enjoyment of peace in themselves, and the pursuit of peace with each other. Nothing can equal that serenity of mind which results from reconciliation with God. It is not like the stillness that precedes the raging storm, but resembles the face of nature, calm and serene on a fine summer's evening.

February 2.

SPIRITUAL DESERTION.

"Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."—Isa. l. 10.

What mysteries are there connected with the life of a Christian! He enjoys peace, and yet he is engaged in a continual conflict; he is quickened, and yet he often complains of his dulness; he has spiritual light, and yet sometimes walks in darkness. Note

A Christian's character described. Two things with regard to him are here stated.

The principle he possesses. Fear. Religion is called the fear of the Lord. It is divinely implanted in the heart, and exerts its influence in the life.

The practice he pursues. Obedience. Christ as Mediator, is the Father's servant, and our Lord, whose we are, and whom we serve. Our obedience must be sincere, cheerful, and constant in its exercise.

A CASE OF TRIAL SUPPOSED. "Walking in darkness." This is the case

When the presence of God is withdrawn. Sometimes he hides himself, but it is only for a small moment. Job, David, and others, felt this.

When the operations of the Spirit are withheld. Sometimes, the Pilgrim, like Christian loses his scroll, and goes on mourning; or, like Saul, slumbers, and loses his spear and cruse.

When his prospects for eternity are darkened,

> "He wants to read his title clear
> To mansions in the skies;"

but he cannot, and cries, O for a beam of celestial light to dart upon my benighted soul, to guide me in my path!

A SOURCE OF COMFORT OPENED. Observe

The interest he may claim. "His God." The certainty of our interest in him does not depend on frames and feelings. He is our God as really in the storm and tempest, as when our sky is bright. The firmament may be overhung with clouds, so as to obstruct from our view the glorious luminary of day; so the clouds of our guilt, imperfections, and doubts, may for a time intercept the bright beams of the Sun of righteousness, but still he shines.

The confidence he may repose. Let him trust and stay upon his God. Nothing for a moment must induce us to give up our hold of his promise. Ultimately he will scatter every mystery. Ultimately he will scatter every cloud, quell every fear, resolve every doubt, and explain every mystery.

> To thee we look; to thee we bow;
> To thee for help we call;
> Our life, our resurrection, thou,
> Our hope, our joy, our all.

February 3.

HIDING GOD'S WORD IN OUR HEART.

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."—Psalm cxix. 11.

David's attachment to the word of God is worthy the imitation of all believers. It was the source of his joy, the food of his soul, his companion in retirement, and his guide through life. Here we have

A wise course to be adopted. To hide God's word in our heart. It may be found in the house, in the head, in the memory, and yet not in the heart. This includes

Reception. Where it is hidden, it must be received; and where it is received, the judgment approves, the affections embrace, the heart feels, and the life conforms to it.

Regard. Many things are hidden, not so much for concealment as security. Thus our Saviour speaks of the "treasure hid in a field." The man who prizes God's word will not rest satisfied till it is deposited in his heart.

Remembrance. It is hidden in him, as something to which he has constant recourse. Memory is the hiding of certain objects in the mind for future use. A sanctified memory is preferable to a good natural one. The spirit of the word may be felt in the heart, where the latter is not retained in the memory.

An important end to be answered. "That I might not not sin against thee." Such a course, if it does not keep us free, yet it will restrain us from sin. There are some particular seasons when it will prove a safeguard. It will silence our murmurings in the day of affliction, it will prevent our yielding in the hour of temptation, it will keep us from despairing in the period of desertion, and, amidst our heaviest trials, it will lead us to the exercise of confidence in our heavenly Father; and we shall resemble the affrighted bird on some lofty tree, in the midst of the howling wind and storm; though her pleasing notes are for a season checked, yet she fixes herself more firmly on the shaking bough.

Thy heavenly words my heart engage,
And well employ my tongue.

February 4.

THE DIVINE PREFERENCE.

"The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." Psalm lxxxvii. 2.

In this psalm glorious things are spoken of the literal Mount Zion, as typical of the Gospel church. One of these we have before us. Let us notice

The places mentioned. "The dwellings of Jacob, and the gates of Zion." By the dwellings of Jacob we are to understand religious families, where secret and social prayer are observed, and the Almighty is both acknowledged and adored. Respecting such families it may be said, Jehovah Shammah, the Lord is there. How delightful would it be if in every dwelling there was an altar erected to God! The gates of Zion denote public religious assemblies. Every ordinance may be called a gate of Zion: here the righteous desire to be found; here they knock, and wait, and watch; and here they are welcome.

The preference given. The language is forcible:—"The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." But why is this the case?

Because there he is more glorified. A public acknowledgment of the excellences of an individual tends more to his honor than a private encomium. It was more honorable to David and Saul that a multitude publicly shouted the praises of their victories, than if one or two had spoken of it in the social circle. God is glorified in families where a few exalt his name, but more so in his temple, where every one speaks of his glory.

Because there he displays more of his power in the conversion of sinners. There his goings forth are seen, there he performs wonders by the rod of his strength, there he builds up his church, there continual accessions are made to its numbers; there, when the mind is shaded by solemn reflection, rays of glory shine from above, and heaven is brought down to man.

Because it more resembles heavenly worship. There are no secret or private acts of worship in heaven, all is public. What a vast assembly, every heart tuned to Jehovah's praise, and no

jarring sound to disturb the harmony! If God loves the gates of Zion, shall not we? O yes, we will,

"We have been there, and still would go,
'Tis like a little heaven below."

February 5.

A CATHOLIC SPIRIT.

"Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."—Eph. vi. 24.

This is a good finish to Paul's letter to the Ephesians. He concludes as he commences, by expressing a wish that those to whom he wrote might be in the enjoyment of God's grace.

The titles ascribed to the Saviour. Here we have

His essential dignity. "Lord." The divinity of Christ is one of the brightest gems in the cabinet of truth. He is the Lord of all: sceptres, thrones, monarchs, princes, dominions, and powers, are all subject to him.

His official character. "Jesus," the Saviour. How sweet his name to the awakened soul! It is an ointment poured forth, so reviving and cheering. His blood secures our pardon in the sight of God, and sanctifies the heart.

His mediatorial qualification. "Christ," that is, the Anointed. The Spirit was given without measure to him, as our Head and Representative.

The love experienced by the Christian.

It is real in its nature; "in sincerity." This is the very soul of religion; a heart attracted with, and fixed on Christ.

It is superlative in its degree. Love, when creatures are the object of it, should be like ordinary rivers, kept within banks and bounds; but when God is the object of it, it should overflow like the Nile, and spread like a sea without limit. God loves a broken, but not a divided heart.

It is active in its operations. Where the love of Christ is shed abroad in the heart, it will have a powerful influence in the life. If the fire of love is kindled within, the flames of zeal will burn without.

The desire expressed by the apostle. It showed a Christian and a catholic spirit. What was its nature? The blessing

he implored for his believing friends was grace; not in the possession, but in the continuance. Those who love Christ have grace, but he wished them to have more grace. What was its extent? "All that loved Christ." Here is nothing like a sectarian spirit. Paul's heart and hands were open to receive and embrace all the followers of Jesus, irrespective of their outward station in life, or their peculiar views of truth. So let it be with us: let us cheerfully take by the hand all who hold the Head.

February 6.

THE EVERLASTING COVENANT.

"He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire."—2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

Though David's house was "not so with God," as he could have wished, and his domestic trials were numerous and severe, yet he rejoiced in the personal interest he possessed in the Divine favor. The subject for our contemplation in this exercise is God's everlasting covenant. Note

Its contents. What does God promise and engage to do for his people?

To protect them by his power. In the midst of dangers, cares, anxieties, and changing scenes, how cheering and delightful the fact of a special and overruling providence?

To supply them with his grace. There is a constant communication kept up between the believer and God. He imparts grace for duty, trials and temptations; for living and dying.

To admit them to glory. Divine choice, effectual calling, grace, and glory, are four links of a golden chain, which can never be broken, because they are united by an omnipotent hand.

Its properties. Three things are stated concerning it. Its duration. An "everlasting covenant." It was drawn up, its arrangements made, and its blessings inserted, from eternity; and it is everlasting in its continuance. Its completeness. "Ordered in all things." In agreements between man and man, the greatest care must be taken to insert every necessary particular. In this covenant every blessing is included, from the

first glimmer of hope before the cross, to the full blaze of glory before the throne. Its security. "Sure." It is sure in the principles on which it is founded, the blessings it contains, the promises it gives, and in its conveyance to all believers. It is secured by the oath of God, the blood of Christ, and the seal of the Spirit.

Its value. This will appear because

It is the ground of all our hopes. "All my salvation." The law will serve as a rule of life, but not as a covenant for salvation. The blood of Christ alone can speak peace to the troubled conscience.

It is the consummation of all our wishes. "All my desire." It is to the covenant God has made with us, we refer, as that which is connected with our highest ambition, and which forms the source of our comfort under every trial. Is this secret of the Lord with you, and has he shown you his covenant?

February 7.

REMEMBRANCE OF CHRIST'S LOVE.

"We will remember thy love."—Cant. i. 4.

What a wonderful faculty is the memory! It produces in the mind a kind of resurrection of past scenes and circumstances. We do well to cultivate the exercise of it, with regard to the things of God. Note here

The subject of remembrance. It is one of the deepest interest and highest importance to which we can refer. Let us remember

Its antiquity. It is from everlasting; before the creation of the world, or the music of the spheres.

Its freeness. It is shown to those who neither deserved nor desired it, nor could make any adequate return.

Its development. The love that consists in words does not deserve the name. We see its designs in the Divine purposes, and its displays in the Divine proceedings. The love of Christ was manifested in his own person when he was on earth, and by his Spirit now he is in heaven. Its duration is eternal.

The remembrance of the subject. It must be

With feelings of gratitude and joy. This will especially be the case in our devotional exercises, when the mind is softened by meditation; in prayer, reading the Scriptures, and at the sacramental table.

It must be continual. We must live, and act, and suffer, and die, in the remembrance of it. It will be an ingredient to sweeten the bitter waters of affliction, give a relish to the streams of comfort, and bear us up in the swellings of Jordan.

It must be practical. It will lead to a steady adherence to the cause of Christ, the conscientious performance of duty, and the patient endurance of trials; it will moderate our attachment to earthly objects, and draw our souls to God, the great centre of attraction.

February 8.

THE EXCELLENCY OF THE DIVINE BEING.

"God is a Spirit."—John iv. 24.

When a celebrated heathen poet was asked by a certain monarch, What is God? he demanded a day to think upon it; at the close of which he desired two days more; at the expiration of that time he requested four days in addition. The king, surprised, asked him what he meant by it; to which the poet answered,—"The more I think of God, the more incomprehensible and mysterious he appears." There are three concise descriptions given of the Almighty in Scripture;—God is light, God is love, and God is a Spirit.

He is the most excellent of all beings. We who dwell in tabernacles of clay, so intimately connected with flesh and blood, and so naturally impressed with sensible objects, cannot possibly know much of the nature of a spirit. We cannot understand what our own souls are; we know less of the nature of angels, which are of a superior order to us; and infinitely less can we conceive of the nature of the Father of spirits. God has in him all the perfections of a spiritual nature; and since we have no notion of any kind of spiritual property but what we discover in our own souls, we join infinitude to each of these proper-

ties, and what is a faculty in a human soul becomes an attribute in God. We exist in place and time, the Divine Being fills the immensity of space with his presence, and inhabits eternity. We are possessed of limited power and knowledge, he is almighty and omniscient. He is light without darkness, love without unkindness, good without evil, and purity without uncleanness. "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!"

He is a living and active being. When we speak of a spirit, life and activity are implied in the term. Vegetable, animal, intellectual, spiritual, and eternal life are derived from him. He is styled, by way of eminence, "the living God." The capacity of acting by himself, or in Trinity of persons in one undivided Godhead, he possessed before any creature was formed; otherwise he could not have created all things by a word,—and we are assured that he shall continue to order and govern all things to the glory of his great name; "for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory forever, amen." We here see that the knowledge of God in the Gospel is infinitely more glorious than the knowledge of him in nature, inasmuch as Scripture revelation is above natural reason; let us seek the knowledge of him in our own experience.

February 9.

PASSING OUR TIME IN FEAR.

"Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear."—1 Peter i. 17.

Having in the foregoing exercise noticed the nature of the Christian's life, let us now consider

The manner in which it should be spent. "In fear." We must bear in mind that there is a fear that is censurable, and a fear that is commendable. We are not to fear man, neither are we to fear so as to distrust God. But we must pass the time of our sojourning here—

In the fear of reverence. When we contrast the Divine Majesty with our meanness, there is enough to call forth, not a dread, but a holy fear of God. Saints in every age have been

characterized by this filial fear. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;" and we are to "perfect holiness in the fear of God." It is an implanted principle: "I will put my fear in their hearts," says God. It is a governing and restraining principle: "So did not I," says Nehemiah, "because of the fear of God." It is connected with joy, and prosperity of soul: thus it is said of the primitive believers, they "were edified and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost were multiplied." We must pass the time of our sojourning here—

In the fear of caution. For the way in which the Christian pilgrim is travelling is beset with snares and temptations. This caution is necessary in reference to our sinful and corrupt natures, and all our spiritual adversaries.

In the fear of anxiety. I mean a deep concern and solicitude as to the safety of our state. The Christian does not fear that he shall perish *in* the way everlasting, but sometimes doubts whether *he* is in it or not. He does not fear that God will not complete his work of grace; but the matter of his anxiety is, whether that work has been begun in him. Reader, how do you regard this world? Are you a stranger, or a settler?—a denizen of the world, or a citizen of heaven? "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."

February 10.

THE SCRIPTURE TESTIMONY.

"The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple."—Psalm xix. 7.

Bishop Horne beautifully remarks on the book of Psalms, "The fairest productions of human wit, after a few perusals, like gathered flowers, wither in our hands, and lose their fragrancy; but these unfading plants of paradise become, as we are accustomed to them, still more and more beautiful; their bloom appears to be daily heightened, fresh odors are emitted, and new sweets are extracted from them. Contemplate God's word

In its nature. "The testimony of the Lord." Examine its contents.

It is a testimony of man's sin. Thus it is a testimony against the human race. Here God testifies against his creatures for their ingratitude, rebellion, sinfulness, and indifference.

It is a testimony of God's grace. The Scripture is a well of water, on the surface of which, if you cast your eye, you will see reflected both the image of God, and your own likeness. Christ says of the Sacred Writings, "They are they which testify of me." They testify of his glory, grace, fulness, love, and salvation, and of the operations of his Spirit.

It is a testimony of a future state. In the writings of the heathen philosophers, what is there to comfort the mind in the prospect of death, or to irradiate the darkness of the sepulchre? But "life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel." Look at God's word

In its property. "It is sure." Some sayings are false, but "this is a faithful saying;" some are not worth listening to, but this is "worthy of all acceptation;" some are uncertain, but this is "sure;" some though true are trifling, but "this is life eternal." Its authenticity might be argued from the character of its Author, the fulfilment of prophecy, and the power of religion. Every Christian is a living witness that "the testimony of the Lord is sure." View God's word

In its effects. "Making wise the simple." By the grace of God it enlightens the ignorant and instructs the simple-hearted in that wisdom which is from above.

February 11.

THE CHRISTIAN A SOJOURNER.

"Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear."—Peter i. 17.

In the verse from which these words are selected, the Almighty is represented under a two-fold character, viz., that of a Father and a Judge; and the relationship in which we thus stand to him is urged as an argument for our passing the time of our sojourning here in fear. Notice

The nature of the Christian's life. "The time of your sojourning here." What a dreadful infatuation has seized man, that he should look upon this world as his home and his por-

tion! It is as if the child on its way to its father's house should sit down, and, foregoing the pleasure of the domestic roof, please and divert himself with the flowers that grow by the wayside, till the night set in, and he lost all track of the road. It is as if a rich heir, going to take possession of his estate, were to stop and spend his time in joining little children in playing with toys and trifles. Three things suggest themselves to the mind with regard to the believers, sojourning here:

View him in his past condition. Whence has the pilgrim come? From the city of Destruction. Bunyan, in his inimitable allegory, speaks beautifully on this subject.

Contemplate him in his present state. What is he? A sojourner. How few there are who regard this world in a proper light! It is only a link in the great chain of our existence,—a narrow vista which opens to the wide expanse of eternity; and an immoderate attachment to it deplumes the pinions on which alone the soul can soar, and binds it to that which is sensual and grovelling. The time of our sojourning here is one of trial, danger, and difficulty. Travellers must put up with many inconveniences, and the heavenly pilgrim must lay his account with many a storm.

Regard him in his future destination. Whither is he going? He is bound for home. How weak and imperfect are our highest conceptions of the glories of the heavenly world! The termination of the Christian's course shall be associated with all that is magnificent and sublime. Let me never be satisfied till I can say, looking up to my heavenly Father, "I am a stranger and a sojourner with thee."

February 12.

GOD AN INCORPOREAL AND IMMORTAL BEING.

"God is a Spirit."—John iv. 24.

He is an incorporeal being. All corporeal beings consist of parts, and so are capable of separation, addition, or diminution; but this would be inconsistent with the perfection of the Almighty, or the nature of spirits, which do not consist of perishable materials. When bodily members are ascribed to God,

they are not to be taken literally, but according to their true scope and intent, which is in a clearer form to set forth and illustrate the various acts and perfections of the Divine nature, to which these members of the body bear some faint resemblance. Thus, the eyes and ears of God signify his omniscience; his hands and arms denote his power; and his face, the manifestation of his favor. We must not conceive of God as having a body, or any corporeal members, as some have done, who only ground their opinion on the literal interpretation of many figurative expressions in Scripture. Our conduct would evince the basest ingratitude to God, if, because he is pleased to stoop to our weakness, we degrade him to our infirmities.

He is an invisible being. The proper object of sight is color, which arises from the various positions of particles of matter, that cause the several reflections of light: but a spirit has neither parts nor matter, and consequently must be invisible. The Almighty can by his infinite power make visible appearances, as he did of old; but these were not visions of his essence, they were merely outward representations, which he formed to notify his presence for special purposes; but as to his own exalted nature, he is the invisible God.

He is an immortal being. A spiritual nature neither has, nor can have in it, any principles of corruption, or tendency to decay. The very idea of a spirit conveys to the mind something imperishable, and not affected by material substances. This eminently applies to God, who is unchangeable in his nature, whose years cannot fail, and who alone is possessed of original and independent immortality. How affecting is it to think of the millions of the human race who are destitute of that revelation which discovers to man the knowledge of God, and unfolds to his view the glories of immortality! Let us pray that the light of truth may speedily dissipate the darkness of error. If God is a Spirit, then he requires spiritual worship, and we should seek above all things to be spiritually acquainted with him,—to have his fear before our eyes, his grace in our hearts, his image on our souls.

God is a spirit, just and wise,
He sees our inmost mind;
In vain to heaven we raise our cries,
And leave our hearts behind.

February 13.

THE CHRISTIAN'S DIGNITY.

"For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."—Matt. xii. 50.

These are gracious words, and proceeded from the lips of Him who spake as never man spake. In them we have the constitution and dignity of the Christian character.

The constitution of the Christian character. It is well for us to consider what is required of us as the genuine followers of Christ. What is included in doing the will of God?

It is to believe. This is expressly stated as being the Father's will. It is more than a common faith: the devils believe and tremble; but many who profess Christianity have never trembled before God. This faith is connected with experience; it is of the operation of God, and works by love.

It is to obey. Obedience is the practical evidence of faith. Faith may be compared to a tree planted in the garden of the soul, rooted and grounded in Christ, covered with the green leaves of a lively profession, watered with heavenly showers, and yielding the fruits of obedience, and the graces of the Spirit. Our obedience must be right in its principle, sincere in its motive, evangelical in its spirit, cheerful in its manner, and universal in its application.

The dignity of the Christian character.

It is attended with present benefits. Here is an endearing alliance:—"The same is my brother, and sister, and mother." It includes an interest in his affections, intimate communion and sympathy.

It shall be succeeded with future honors. He who owns them here, will not be ashamed of them hereafter. They shall be kings and priests unto God, pillars in his temple, and jewels in his crown.

It is conferred without partiality. "Whosoever." There is no restriction but that which we put on ourselves. We cannot go beyond the Gospel commission, for it extends to sinners whose iniquities have reached unto heaven, are as black as hell, and numerous as the sands on the sea-shore.

February 14.

JOB'S DESIRE.

"O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments".—Job xxiii. 3, 4.

This is the language of a pious soul under the hidings of God's countenance. Job had great trials, but exercised great patience under them. Observe here—

His distressing state. He mourns an absent God; that is, he had lost for a season the sweet sense of his presence. How often is this the case with us! But whence does it arise? Our iniquities separate between him and our souls, so that he hides his face from us; they are as clouds gathering around us, and obstructing our view of the Sun of righteousness. Our souls cleave unto the dust instead of soaring to the skies.

His anxious wish. He desires to find God. This is a good evidence of a renewed heart. How distressing is it, when the believer goes from one ordinance to another, to the Bible, the field of meditation, the throne of grace, the sanctuary, still exclaiming, "O that I knew where I might find him!" Nothing will do as a substitute for God. Without him the world is a blank, life a burden, the Bible a sealed book, and ordinances tasteless and insipid.

His fixed determination.

He would draw near. "That I might come even to his seat." He would no longer keep at a distance. Thus the Christian's necessities urge him, the goodness of God emboldens him, and his desires make him eloquent.

He would open his cause. "I would order my cause before him." As if he had said, I would unbosom myself to him, and tell him the inward distress and anguish of my spirit; I would come, not to complain, but to beseech; not to dictate, but to submit; not to charge him with folly, but to take shame to myself.

He would plead. "And fill my mouth with arguments." He would remind him of his great name, his former loving-kindness, his promises, and his power. Let us rejoice that God is to be found of them that seek him.

All thy hope on Jesus place,
Plead his promise, trust his grace.

February 15.

PRAYER.

"And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive." Matt. xxi. 22.

Devotion forms a principal part of experimental religion. The believer can no more live without prayer, than he can exist without breath. It is the soul's converse with her God; it is a ladder fixed on earth, whose top reaches to heaven, on which petitions and blessings are continually ascending and descending; it is sweet incense offered on the altar of the heart, burnt with the fire of the Spirit, and presented before the throne above in the censer of the intercession of our Great High Priest; it is the native air, the favorite atmosphere, the very element and home of the believer.

"What an asylum has the soul in prayer!"

Let us observe two things concerning this duty.

The matter of prayer. For what are we to pray? We are allowed to seek temporal favors, but our principal solicitude should be for those that are spiritual: such as

A sight of our own depravity. Without this, prayer cannot be rightly performed or enjoyed. Unless we see the deformity of sin, we shall not breathe after holiness.

A sense of pardoning mercy. After the wound is opened, we must seek to have it healed. When we have seen what we are, we must pray that God would make us what he would have us to be.

Increase in spiritual attainments. Ambition in spiritual things is allowable, and covetousness is enjoined:—"Covet earnestly the best gifts." We must pray that we may, in every gift and grace, abound more and more.

The manner of prayer. It is to be "believing." Prayer suffers shipwreck for want of faith, because it dashes on the rock of unbelief. We must believe that we need the blessings of salvation for our happiness, that we cannot obtain them by our merits, that God is willing to confer them, and that the mediation of Christ is the only channel through which they can be received. May ours be the prayer of faith! What encouragement have we to pray! As often as we draw near to the throne

of grace, we find ourselves beside an overflowing fountain of good—touching the very springs of eternal mercy—in the midst of the very treasures of heaven.

February 16.

THE ADVANTAGES OF MEDITATION.

"Meditate upon these things."—1 Tim. iv. 15.

Man is a complication of wonders; this fact is proved in the very curious formation of the corporeal, and the mysterious constitution of the mental part of his system; and in the intimate connection which subsists between two such opposites as mind and matter. If there is much to admire in the texture and workmanship of the casket, how much more in the exquisite nature and imperishable properties of the jewel it contains! Man is a thoughtful and reflecting being; and while his sinful nature draws his contemplations down to earth, God calls on him to let his thoughts and reflections bear on the objects of an unseen world. The world sketches out to our view a pleasing landscape of all that is beautiful to the eye, charming to the senses, and gratifying to the feelings, and says, Here fix your thoughts; while religion takes us near to it, and shows us that it is not a reality, but an *ignis fatuus* of the mind, which eludes our grasp; and leading us to the enjoyment of solid pleasures, presents before us a fair and bright prospect of a celestial paradise, a crystallized river, and fields of living green; and says, "Meditate on these things." Meditation may be considered in

The variety of its subjects. They are so rich, we can never exhaust them; and so delightful that we can never be weary of them. Let us meditate on the character and government of God, on the glories and excellences of Jesus, and on the grace of the Holy Spirit; the vastness of our privileges, the nature of our duties, and the brightness of our prospects.

The extent of its advantages. Consider it more particularly with regard to religious ordinances.

It prepares us for the observance of them. Meditation is like the gentle shower that softens the ground, and prepares it for

the seed. It is the soul's retiring to dress itself to meet the king in his palace.

It helps us on the performance of them. It is the spiritual digestion of the mind. That which falls on the ear should occupy the thoughts in the sanctuary.

It refreshes us in the review of them. Thus in the sweet exercise of Christian meditation, you shall be satisfied with the goodness of God's house after you have left it.

It feasts us in the absence of them. There are seasons when we cannot visit the temple; it is well if we have a store-house within. My soul, if there be any virtue, or if there be any praise, think on these things.

February 17.

THE NATURE OF MEDITATION.

"Meditate upon these things:"—1 Tim. iv. 15.

Such was Paul's charge to Timothy, but the words will admit of general application. The Christian is to be a man of meditation. Let us look at this pleasing duty in

The peculiarity of its nature. It does not consist in the exercise of the memory: many possess a good natural memory, who know nothing about spiritual meditation. A good memory is a great assistance in this Christian duty, though not always connected with it. There is a distinction between study and meditation. By study we acquire learning, by meditation we turn it to account; by study the mind is filled with knowledge, by meditation the soul feasts on it: study consists chiefly in the application of the mind, but meditation in the excursions of the mind. One has described meditation as the soul being rolled into itself. You may be alone, and yet not engaged in this exercise. The Christian loves solitude, and feels that he is never less alone than when alone. Meditation makes the world appear to him as a shadowy arch, through which he gazes on the bright and expansive sky beyond. It is an exercise, which, while it connects the soul with all that is solemn and sublime, produces the most elevating and reviving effects on the mind. While, therefore, we delight in seasons of social intercourse, let

us never forget the charms of solitude, but prize its golden hours. One has beautifully remarked—The good man soars to heaven in mind, though chained to earth in body: it is thus the superb eagle, in the region of thunder, darts along on majestic pinion, and seems to say to mortals, "I was born on the earth, but I live in the sky."

February 18.

THE CHRISTIAN'S DESIRE.

"The desire of the righteous shall be granted."—Prov. x. 24.

What a contrast is there between the righteous and the wicked! They differ in their principles, feelings, pursuits, prospects, and final destinies. Let us observe here respecting the Christian.

The character he bears. "Righteous." None are so by nature. This is founded in reason, stated in Scripture, and proved by experience. Many are so in their own imagination; but some in reality, by God's grace. Such individuals bear two marks; the one is wrought within them. The other is shown without. Righteousness is imputed to the soul, and exhibited in the life.

The desire he cherishes. It is excited by Divine grace, and therefore very different to that which arises from corrupt nature. He desires

Increase in knowledge. This feeling will strengthen in proportion to the advances he makes. What is the highest point of knowledge to which we can attain here, compared with that which shall be possessed in glory? Here there are but a few scattered rays of light, which only discover to us more clearly the dark clouds of ignorance and imperfection that still envelop the mind; but there shall be the full blaze of immortality, dispelling every shadow, and chasing away the last mist that would gather around the soul.

Growth in grace. Many figures are employed in Scripture to set forth the pleasing truth of progression in the Divine life. "Forward" is the Christian's watchword.

Enjoyment in duty. Too many are contented with the formal observance, without the spiritual enjoyment, of ordinances.

Support in trial. It is a good evidence when we feel desire to be purified in, rather than to be delivered from, the fiery furnace of affliction.

Rest in glory. This is the consummation of all. When this is granted, the Christian has nothing more to desire; his prayers ere ended.

The satisfaction he obtains. His desire shall be granted, but how? Freely, gradually, and entirely.

February 19.

WAITING ON GOD IN ORDINANCES.

"Waiting for the moving of the water."—John v. 3.

The narrative related in the context is highly interesting. We have all heard of the pool of Bethesda, and of the angel who troubled its waters. It is a just representation of our waiting on God in Divine ordinances. Here is

A figure to explain. The blessings of the Gospel are set forth by a variety of comparisons; bread to satisfy our hunger, milk to nourish, meat to strengthen, wine to cheer, water to quench our thirst. They are compared to water—

Because of its cleansing quality. Sin has overspread our soul with its contaminating influence, and nothing can purify us but the blood of Christ, the waters of salvation.

Because of its healing properties. Some waters have medicinal qualities; and individuals afflicted in various ways, travel to a great distance, in order to derive the benefit they are calculated to afford. There is a river whose streams can heal us of our spiritual maladies.

Because of its reviving influence. How refreshing is water to the faint and languid pilgrim; and how exhilarating are the waters of salvation to the weary, drooping sinner! Its blessings are in him as a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

A truth to illustrate. It is twofold.

The inefficiency of human instrumentality. I mean, apart from Divine influence. The angel must trouble the waters, or there was no virtue in them: will not this apply to ordinances?

Without the Spirit's aid they can profit us nothing—there will be a dead stillness.

The efficacy of Divine agency. When the angel of the covenant comes down and moves and agitates the waters, how glorious are the effects produced! Sinners stepping in are made whole, and the influence extends, not as here, merely to the individual who was fortunate enough to descend first, but to all who are anxiously waiting for the moving of the water.

A DUTY TO ENFORCE. "Wait." How? With earnest prayer, confident expectation, humble dependence, and continued perseverance.

February 20.

THE UNSPEAKABLE GIFT.

"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."—2 Cor. ix. 15.

GOD is essentially and immutably good. All the virtues and excellences that adorn us as creatures, as well as all the gifts and graces that ennoble us as Christians, are the streams issuing from him as the divine Fountain, or the beams descending from him as the Father of lights. But Christ is his unspeakable gift, for which our unfeigned gratitude is demanded. Observe

THE GIFT BESTOWED. It is styled unspeakable. Jesus is so,

In the glory he possesses. There is in him, as God and man, a combination of excellences, a glory of wisdom, power, love, majesty and grace; a glory that outshines the brightness of the sun.

In the grace he manifests. Who can fathom the depths of his love, or describe the riches of his grace? We behold it in its heights, and lengths, and breadths, and depths; and in the vast contemplation are lost in wonder and astonishment.

In the sufferings he endured. Were not the pangs of his soul unutterable, when the sword of Divine justice pierced him, and the arrows of the Almighty fastened on him?

In the blessings he bestows. The satisfaction cannot be fully expressed; the peace passeth understanding; the hope is within the veil, the joy is unspeakable, and the glory that awaits us is yet to be revealed.

The gratitude paid. God is the Giver. It is according to the purposes of his grace, the promises of his word, and the fulness of time. How is this gift to be acknowledged?

By an ardent attachment to him. There is everything in Christ to attract your love, and secure your regard. "How welcome," says a living writer, "is Jesus to a soul taught of God; as rural flowers to the sense, when the softening sun renders the air genial, when the fields breathe balmy freshness in the morning beam; when dew-drops tremble on every leaf; and the slow zephyr toils along the landscape, as if laden with sweets!"

By a bold confession of him. If this gift is received in the heart, it will be acknowledged openly and fearlessly.

By active zeal for him. The best way to show our gratitude for the Father's gift, is to seek to spread abroad the Saviour's fame. If God has given us his Son, let us give him our hearts.

February 21.

PATIENCE.

"For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise."—Heb. x. 36.

We have need of grace to entitle us to the promise, faith to rely on its truth, prayer to plead its personal application, hope to animate us in the expectation of its fulfilment, and patience and perseverance that we may receive it. Patience is requisite, both on a present and future account. We need it

For the performance of present duty. "Doing the will of God" includes

Active obedience. As God does not send any into the world, so he does not plant any in the church to be idle. His will is our standard, and his grace is our support in duty.

Passive submission. The life of the believer here is continual exercise; there are many tests by which God tries his people. How hard is it to bear with patience accumulated trials; and while clouds gather thick around us, and billows roll in rapid succession over us, to preserve a calmness and serenity of mind, which enables us to smile at the storm, to kiss the hand that makes us smart, and say—

"Blest be that hand, whether it shed
Mercies or judgments o'er my head:
Extend the sceptre or the rod,
Blest hand! 'tis still the hand of God."

For the enjoyment of future happiness. What is "the promise?" It refers to the last promise, the grand consummation of the whole. Thus believers in glory are said to be inheriting the promises. There are many motives that should excite us to the exercise of patience. Heaven is worth waiting for, the period is not long, our present comforts and provisions are great, impatience ill becomes us, and can do us no good; those who are now inheriting, were once pleading the promises.

February 22.

REDEMPTION.

"Eternal redemption."—Heb. ix. 12

In these two words we have the grand theme of revelation, the mightiest work of God, and the best news to man. The priests under the law prefigured the Saviour; but he excels them in the dignity of his person, the purity of his nature, the perpetuity of his office, and the value of his sacrifice. Let us contemplate eternal redemption. Every new covenant blessing bears the mark of love.

The blessing it includes. The very term explains its meaning; it is deliverance from spiritual bondage, and an introduction into glorious liberty. Its full extent cannot be known till we unite with the redeemed in heaven, where its glories shall fill our minds with wonder, our hearts with love, and our tongues with praise.

The source from whence it flows. The streams of salvation issue from the fountain of Divine grace. The love of Christ prompted him to the work of human redemption. Every new covenant blessing bears the mark of love.

The price by which it is procured. It was such a price that none but an Infinite Being could advance. Estimate its worth by this, and remember that the degradation to which the Saviour stooped, the scenes of suffering through which he

passed, and the costly offering he made, were to procure eternal redemption.

The glory it displays. It throws a bright lustre on all the Divine perfections, and makes the glory of each to centre in the cross, where mercy and truth meet together, and righteousness and peace embrace each other.

The freeness by which it is distinguished. O delightful fact, while there is here the brightest display of glory, there is the freest discovery of grace. "Liberty to the captive" is the Gospel proclamation.

The obligation it involves. If Christ has redeemed us, we must glorify him in our bodies and spirits, which are his. At every step let our language be, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Let us display more of the life and activity of godliness,—and remember that religion is not the dungeon air, but the mountain breeze; not the stagnant pool, but the running stream.

February 23.

GOD'S GOODNESS TO HIS PEOPLE.

"Truly God is good to Israel: even to such as are of a clean heart."—Psalm lxxiii. 1.

Asaph, to whom this Psalm is ascribed, was greatly perplexed when he saw the prosperity of the wicked, and the pains and crosses that attended the righteous; but he went into the sanctuary, and there his mind was relieved. He here acknowledges God's goodness to his people. The passage contains a very encouraging declaration. Consider

Whom it regards. The children of God: those who are Israelites indeed. There are several marks they bear. They have a heart enlightened in the knowledge of God, attracted with the love of God, renewed by the Spirit of God, and consecrated to the glory of God.

What it includes. God is good to all in the gifts of providence, but especially to his people in the blessings of grace. Three things show this.

Their past experience. What a change has he wrought in them; it was he that brought them from sin's pernicious road,

and led their feet into the way of peace. Believers should remember the hole of the pit whence they were digged. "Memory," says Boston, "is the store-house of former experiences, and they are the Christian's way-marks, by attentively observing which, he may know where he is, even in a dark hour."

Their present enjoyments. Are they not possessed of a peace which passeth all understanding, and a joy, that is unutterable, a faith that draws aside the curtain of futurity, and exhibits the magnificent objects of an unseen world, and a hope that maketh not ashamed? Would they exchange their present for their past condition?

Their future prospects. Is not Jehovah good in giving such exceeding great and precious promises both for time and eternity? Millions above, and multitudes below, unite in confirming the truth that God is good to Israel. Can you not add your testimony?

February 24.

CHRISTIAN CONSISTENCY.

"Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."—Eph. iv. 1.

Paul rejoiced that, though he was in bonds, the word of the Lord was not bound. This epistle was written while he was "the prisoner of the Lord." We have here

The statement of Christian privilege. Believers are effectually called by the Spirit.

They are called to knowledge. In conversion the darkness is removed from the understanding, and the true light shines into the soul: they have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things.

They are called to holiness. To serve a holy God, to receive holy impressions, to cultivate holy tempers and feelings, and to engage in holy pursuits.

They are called to peace. This is the characteristic of the Gospel of Christ, and pervades every part of it; and when it shall be universally spread, war shall be heard of no more.

They are called to glory. How high and dignified is their

destination! All the grandeur and magnificence of the world, when put in competition with the bright anticipations of the sons of God, are but as the feeble light of a taper to the splendor of the sun.

The requirement of Christian duty. They are to walk worthy of their vocation. There is to be a correspondence between their calling and their conversation. If they are called to knowledge, they should walk wisely; if to holiness, they should walk unblamably; if to peace, they should walk affectionately; and if to glory, they should walk cheerfully. Let us study to make our calling and election sure: if we can discern the lineaments of the Divine image on our souls, these are the counterpart of the golden characters of his love, in which our names are written in the book of life.

"My name from the palms of his hands
Eternity will not erase:
Impressed on his heart it remains,
In marks of indelible grace:
Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven."

February 25.

PREACHING JESUS.

"Preaching the Lord Jesus."—Acts xi. 20.

How true is it, that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church! The history of the cause of our Redeemer presents many instances in proof of this. We have one in the context. A persecution arose on account of Stephen, the first who suffered martyrdom after Christ's death. Those who were scattered abroad at that time went forth with their lives in their hands, "preaching the Lord Jesus." Observe

The subject they preached. But what is included in it? It is to proclaim Christ,

In the glory of his Person. Who does not feel his own utter unworthiness, in the contemplation of such a subject as this? The sacred writers have employed various images in

order to set forth the glories of the only Begotten of the Father. They have brought the loveliest objects in nature to their aid, but

"All are too mean to speak his worth,
Too mean to set the Saviour forth."

The perfection of his work. He came to take away sin, and bring salvation. He came that the storm of Divine wrath, which was long gathering, and threatened to burst on our guilty heads, might be hushed, and pass away from us; that our sky might be bright and serene; that, instead of the thunderbolts of his anger, we might have the still small voice of his love, and instead of the flashing of his vengeance, we might have the light of his countenance.

The loveliness of his example. Thus, as his death is our substitution, his life is our pattern. In him we have the only perfect standard of moral excellence for our imitation. "The conduct of Christ," says Harris, "is a copy, a living map of the immense expanse of the Divine perfections, reduced from its infinite dimensions, and subdued to a scale studiously adapted to the feeble vision of man."

The triumphs of his cross. The very circumstance which his enemies thought would extinguish his fame, and exterminate his cause, established them more securely. Already its conquests are great and glorious, multitudes have been attracted to the sacred spot, and found countless blessings; ere long all nations shall flow to it, recline under its shadow, and eat of its fruits. Am I one of its trophies?

February 26.

SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL.

"And the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord."—Acts xi. 21.

That is, with the men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who preached at Antioch to the Grecians, the Lord Jesus. Let us observe

The support they received. "The hand of the Lord was with them." Bodily members, as well as human passions, are ascribed to the Deity, in compassion to our ignorance: thus, as his countenance denotes his favor; his eyes, his wisdom, and

omniscience; so his hand and arm signify his power. In what respects was God with them?

To give them suitable qualifications for their work. The most splendid natural gifts and acquirements, a mind richly furnished with all the stores of human learning, will not qualify a minister for his arduous work, without the Spirit's teaching; but let the heart be divinely impressed and endued from on high, and the heralds of the cross go forth with all the earnestness of feeling, with the forcible appeal, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen," and we may confidently expect the Divine blessing.

To bestow his gracious presence on their work. They needed encouragement in the midst of so much persecution; and the consciousness that though the hand of their enemies was against them, the hand of the Lord was with them, animated and emboldened them in their work.

To impart his Divine blessing on their work. They had had a large measure of success. As they planted and watered, God gave the increase.

THE SUCCESS THEY OBTAINED. "A great number believed, and turned unto the Lord."

Its nature. "They believed." This was a saving faith implanted on the heart by the operation of the Spirit. It was more than their embracing the principles of Christianity; it was the cordial reception of Christ.

Its evidence. "They turned unto the Lord." This is a true sign of genuine faith; its tendency is practical.

Its extent. "A great number." Thus there was a considerable addition to the church. The whole gives us a fine display of the wisdom of God in overruling events, which appeared to militate against his cause, for the extension and glory of it.

"See heathen nations bending
Before the God we love,
And thousand hearts ascending
In gratitude above;
While sinners, now confessing,
The gospel call obey,
And seek the Saviour's blessing—
A nation in a day."

February 27.

ADOPTION.

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."—John i. 12.

The phraseology here employed, supposes a very awful fact, that there are some who reject the Saviour. Look at the verse preceding the text, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." Here is a visit of the greatest kindness, and an act of the basest ingratitude. But let us notice

What the Christian does to the Saviour. He gives him a cordial reception. Receiving and believing in Christ are synonymous terms. It implies

An acquaintance with him. We do not repose confidence in an individual, without a knowledge of him; and if we would exercise faith in Christ, we must possess a spiritual acquaintance with him. There may be faith in an unseen, but not in an unknown Saviour.

Confidence in him. Believing on his name implies the repose of the soul on his atonement, and the grounding of all our hopes on his mediation. It is not a nominal but a real faith, not a dead but a living one, not a common but a saving one.

The reception of him. Christ is to be received in all the characters by which he is made known, in all the offices he performs, in all the blessings he confers, and in all the duties he requires.

What the Saviour does for the Christian. "To them gave he power to become the sons of God."

The exalted privilege conferred. They have an honorable title; not only a new name, but a new nature. They realize much here, but anticipate more in the world to come. They are under the care of Divine Providence, in the reception of enriching grace, and in prospect of eternal glory.

The Divine agency acknowledged. "To them gave he power." The original word signifies right or authority. This he does by the efficacy of his cross; thus it is procured, by the grace of his Spirit, thus it is bestowed.

February 28.

LOVE TO THE BRETHREN.

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." 1 John iii. 14.

Love is the leading characteristic of the Gospel, and the fulfilling of the law. If love to God is the essence of religion, love to the brethren is the evidence of it. We shall make and answer two inquiries, in the explanation of these words.

What is the change here referred to? It is conversion. Various figures are employed in order to set it forth. Here it is styled a passing from death unto life. Notice

The affecting condition from which they are delivered—"death." It is a spiritual death. There are no symptoms of life, no principles of life, and no desires after life. The sinner is in the grave of the natural state, and hastening to the second death.

The delightful state into which they are introduced—"life." It consists in the illumination of the mind, the renewing of the heart, and the reformation of the life, in devotedness to God, and communion with him. This communion is spiritual in its nature, delightful in its enjoyment, and divine in its effects. This life is associated with dignity, connected with the highest satisfaction, progressive in its tendency, and shall be crowned with eternal glory.

The peculiar manner in which it is effected. Believers are here said to pass from death unto life. But is it their own act? No. Such a change is the effect of the Spirit's agency. He infuses the principles of life into the soul. What a happy transition! Have we experienced it? This leads us to the other inquiry—

How may we ascertain that we are the subjects of it? There are many ways by which this may be discovered in our experience, but the evidence mentioned in our text is of a practical tendency; "Because we love the brethren." Observe

The objects of this love. "The brethren." By this term we may understand generally all mankind, but especially believers. They are the brethren in Christ, having the same origin, nature, privileges, and destinies.

The manner in which it is to be evinced. Not in word only,

but in deed. By feeling interested in their welfare, by delighting in their society, by rejoicing in their prosperity, by sympathizing with them in their sorrows, and by remembering them in our prayers. We are not only to love them, as they are creatures formed by God's power, but as Christians renewed by his grace.

March 1.

THE SOLEMN INQUIRY.

"And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Acts ix. 6.

The repentance of every sinner must afford joy to the friends of Christ, because then a soul is saved from death, a brand is plucked from the fire, Satan's empire is lessened, and Christ's kingdom is increased. But surely the conversion of Saul of Tarsus was a matter of extraordinary interest. Let us glance at

The sudden effect produced. The voice of God arrested him in his journey to Damascus, when perhaps he was delighting himself with the prospect of making havoc in the church there; an overwhelming blaze of glory shone round about him, while the appeal thundered in his ear, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

There was an effect of fear; "he trembled." His conscience had been asleep, but now it was aroused, and he who had made so many to quake with fear now trembles himself. The martyrdom of Stephen was, no doubt, fresh in his recollection, and guilt seized his soul. This will be the effect when the Spirit pours the rays of Divine light into the darkened mind: we tremble before God.

There was an effect of surprise. "He was astonished" at what he saw and heard; astonished at the glory of Christ; he had rejected and despised him as a deceiver imposing on the credulity of weak-minded men; astonished at the knowledge of Christ, that his deeds of infamy had been observed; that his name and thoughts and designs were known to Jesus; astonished at the love of Christ, that he should not inflict punishment on him immediately after exposing his sin; astonished at the

power of Christ, that could stem the torrent of his iniquity, and arrest him in his errand of blood.

There was an effect of inquiry. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" When we find ourselves in the path of error, we must inquire for the way of truth. The awakened sinner puts this question from a sense of guilt, a view of danger, and an apprehension of vengeance.

March 2.

THE HARMONY OF PROVIDENCE.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."—Rom. viii. 28.

THE providence of God is an interesting subject for our contemplation, extending as it does from the mightiest to the meanest of his creatures. It is so vast that he presides over the armies of heaven, and the destinies of states and empires are under his control; so minute that a sparrow falleth not to the ground without his knowledge of it. This passage gives us an animating view of it.

A DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTER. Believers are described

By their calling. They have the inward call of the Spirit, accompanied with Divine power, and according to the eternal purpose of God.

By their love. This will be found in the hearts of all the children of God, and is evinced by their delight in, thirst after, communion with, and obedience to him.

A DECLARATION OF COMFORT. To such individuals, all things work together for good. Here note

Universality. "All things;" that is, all the providential dispensations of God, not our sins and acts of rebellion against him, but his dealings with us. How prone are we to say with Jacob, "All these things are against me!"

Harmony. "Work together." This may allude to the mixing up of various ingredients of different medicinal qualities, in order to relieve the patient laboring under some bodily malady. God often effects the greatest good, by apparently the most unlikely means. There must be time for them to work and harmonize together, and by-and-by we shall see the glorious

Design, "for good." This is the end of God in all that concerns us, to wean us from the world, endear us to himself, prepare us for his will in all things, and ripen us for glory.

An expression of confidence. "We know;" the Apostle does not speak of it as a matter of probability, but as something certain. We know it from the word of Scripture, and the testimony of experience. Providence may be compared to a great clock, containing in it the most curious machinery, in which there are many wheels of various dimensions and complex movement; but all is regulated exactly by the great Fountain of light, and will go on keeping time and order, till the ultimate designs of God are accomplished.

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March 3.

THE GRACIOUS REPLY.

"And the Lord said unto him, Arise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."—Acts ix. 6.

This was the language of Jesus to Saul of Tarsus, in the midst of his trembling and astonishment, when arrested by the arm of omnipotence and love, on his way to Damascus. Let us notice

The Divine direction given. In his awakening and conviction, a miraculous influence is employed; but he is to receive further instructions in the use of means. When the penitent sinner, under a deep sense of his guilt, inquires what he must do, we have a suitable reply—

Believe in Christ. This was the direction of Paul and Silas to the Philippian jailer. Stay not questioning his willingness, for "every one that asketh receiveth"—doubt not his power, for he is "able to save to the uttermost"—plead not your unfitness, for though you are not worthy, you are welcome.

Repent of sin. This doctrine was proclaimed by the prophets, taught by Christ and his apostles, and is now published by the ambassadors of truth. The tears of repentance for sin must precede the emotions of joy on account of pardon.

Pray for mercy. Prayer is one of the best evidences of a changed heart. It was said of Saul, "Behold, he prayeth." A

single sentence, a groan that cannot be uttered, proceeding from a contrite heart, shall never be despised.

Live to God. Those whom God renews by his grace are bound by the most solemn ties to live to his glory. Go, then, to the sacred volume, visit the sanctuary, and Divine ordinances; and there it shall be told thee what thou must do. Reader, arise, the Master is come, and calleth for thee.

March 4.

SEEKING CHRIST IN YOUTH.

"I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me."—Prov. viii. 17.

So says our Saviour, under the character of Wisdom; let the young remember that he has peculiar claims on them. Note

WHAT HE REQUIRES OF YOU. It is to love and seek him.

The principles you are to possess. "Love." This is reasonable when you consider who he is, what he became, and what he has done. He deserves your supreme affection and regard. "My son, give me thy heart." If this is not yielded, all your sacrifices are vain.

The practice you are to pursue. "Seek him." This implies that you have lost him; his image, love, favor, and friendship are lost by sin, but they may be regained. Where is he to be sought? In the Scriptures of truth, at the footstool of mercy, and in the house of God. How? Earnestly, constantly, and perseveringly. When? "Early." Begin in the morning of your days, for there is much to be done; then the mind is more susceptible of Divine impressions, and there is a comparative freedom from the many hindrances that encompass us in after life; and the night cometh when no man can work. The flower of youth never looks so lovely as when it bends towards the Sun of righteousness.

WHAT HE PROMISES TO YOU. If you love him, you shall be loved of him; and if you seek him, he will be found of you.

The love he bears. How wonderful is it when you consider his greatness, your unworthiness, and the ways in which his love is manifested!

The assurance he gives. You shall find him as your God in covenant, your guide in youth, your refuge in anger, your support in age, your hope in death, your plea in judgment, and your triumph in glory.

"The soul that longs to see my face,
Is sure my love to gain:
And those that early seek my grace,
Shall never seek in vain."

March 5.

DIVINE PROTECTION.

"He will keep the feet of his saints."—1 Sam. ii. 9.

This is part of Hannah's song of praise to God, who had given her an answer to her prayers in the birth of Samuel. Note

The character described, "his saints." It is often used as a term of reproach, but it is a title of honor and dignity. Two ideas are included in it.

Separation. A saint is one set apart for God, for the reception of his grace, the promotion of his glory, and the eternal enjoyment of his presence. Those who are dedicated to God must be separated from the world.

Sanctity. To be a saint is to be made holy, and to have all the powers and passions of the mind sanctified for God.

The truth implied. The saints are exposed to danger, and require Divine protection.

There are dangers within us, and these arise from the depravity and corruption of the human heart; here is our worst enemy, and the seat of all evil.

There are dangers around us. The world with its flattering charms accosts our eye, and presents a gilded cup filled with deadly poison; and our adversary the devil goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, so that we have need to pray, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe."

The safety insured. "He will keep the feet of his saints," that is, all that belongs to them, even to the lowest part of the body, shall be under his care; he will establish their goings,

keep them from falling, and order all their steps. Let us therefore commit our way to him, and go forth in his strength, resting on the arm of Omnipotence. We may meet opposition in our course, but it shall be overruled for good. The young tree that is shaken by the wind may lose some leaves, and some fruit too; but the root only strikes itself deeper into the ground, and the branches are prepared for a richer crop of fruit, when the summer returns.

"He guards thy soul, he keeps thy breath,
Where thickest dangers come:
Go and return, secure from death,
Till God shall call thee home."

March 6.

CHRISTIAN HUMILITY.

"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord."—James iv. 10.

We cannot fail to remark, in reading the Scriptures, what an inseparable connection exists between duty and privilege. We serve a good Master, who, while he does not require more than we can render, promises more than we can ask or think. Look at the passage before us. Here is

An important duty. It is that of humility.

Reason teaches it. How natural is pride to man! It is a noxious weed that grows in the garden of nature, and nothing but the grace of God can root it up. Should not the finite creature be humbled before the infinite Jehovah? Is it not unreasonable for a weak and perishing worm of the earth to indulge in feelings of pride?

Scripture enforces it. It is enforced by precept and example. How much is said in commendation of this Christian grace, and by what a variety of motives are we urged to cultivate it. It is represented as desirable in itself, ornamental to the character, and beneficial in its results.

Our welfare requires it. We must be humbled before the cross, ere we are elevated to the throne. Grace is given to the humble. A proud Christian! It is an anomaly, a contradiction in terms; you may as well talk of an honest thief, an ignorant

philosopher, or a cowardly hero. Humility adorns its possessor. The humble Christian seeks not the approbation of the thoughtless multitude, but is satisfied to cast in his lot with the despised few; and rejoices that his witness is in heaven, and his record on high. He may be compared to the violet which rises but a little way above the ground, and hangs down its blushing head, and covers its beauties with its own leaves; and were it not that the odor of his many virtues drew the attention of those around, he would choose to bloom and wither in solitude. Let me, then, cultivate this grace, and learn of him who was meek and lowly in heart.

"The saint that wears heaven's brightest crown,
In deepest adoration bends;
The weight of glory bows him down
The most when most his soul ascends:
Nearest the throne itself must be
The footstool of humanity."

March 7.

CHRISTIAN EXALTATION.

"And he shall lift you up."—James iv. 10.

The sentiment of the whole verse is in accordance with the maxim of the Saviour,—"He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." We have here

A PLEASING PROMISE. It is made to humble souls. *God lifts them up from despair by a sweet sense of pardon.* Sometimes the load of guilt is felt so heavily by the poor sinner, that mercy is despaired of, and his case is viewed as desperate; but in God's own time the promise is fulfilled, and as the bright beams of the Divine favor pierce the dark clouds of sin, and scatter them to the four winds of heaven, a cheering voice is heard,—"Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Thus God lifts upon us the light of his countenance.

He lifts them up from affliction by the comforts of his grace. When the hand of his fatherly correction is on them, the arm of his paternal love and pity is beneath them. And when he

has tried them in his own way, and for his own wise and gracious designs, he will bring them forth.

He lifts them up in death with his cheering presence. Death is the tribute money that every believer must pay before he enters the gate of heaven. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." Though the poor body is brought low in death, how often is the soul lifted up! What ravishing views has it of Christ and things divine, even while grappling with the last enemy; and longing for a release from the prison of clay and the contaminating influence of sin, to breathe in the pure, untainted atmosphere of immortal bliss!

He will lift them up from the grave at the last day. Their mortal remains are deposited in the tomb, only for a certain period. At the resurrection, the trumpet of the archangel shall wake them, and the Divine power shall collect and re-animate their scattered dust, so that in their flesh they shall see God.

He will lift them up to the glories of heaven. What an elevation!—The happy saint raised to the very throne of the great Eternal; lifted up above the reach of all that would degrade its nature, defile its purity, interrupt its enjoyments, or disturb its blissful contemplations. Let us cultivate a humble spirit, and, disdaining to thirst after worldly distinctions, seek that honor that cometh from above.

March 8.

THE ATTRACTION OF LOVE.

"I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love; and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them."—Hos. xi. 4

This chapter records Israel's sins and God's mercies. In the text we have three things that God does for his people. Let us look at each in the order in which they stand. They may be expressed in three words.

Attraction. "I drew them." Observe

Its nature. It supposes a state of distance. The design of God in the Gospel is to draw man to himself. Sin has enticed, mercy attracts. This is a drawing from the paths of sin to the

ways of holiness, to the throne of grace, the house of God, the cross of Christ, and the glories of heaven.

Its Agent. It is God himself. The corruptions of the human heart are so strong, that nothing short of a Divine power can subdue them.

Its method. "With cords of a man, with bands of love." It is reasonable. The Almighty condescends to reason and plead with us, that we may reason with ourselves. He argues the case with us, as one man would with another. It is affectionate:—"With bands of love." The Gospel breathes love, and is calculated to attract the mind and win the heart. The awful denunciations of the law must always be connected with the sweet accents of the Gospel.

LIBERTY. "And I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws." Here is an allusion to the merciful husbandman, who does not keep his cattle continually at work, but releases them from the yoke, that they may rest and eat. In the cultivation of the land in eastern countries, it was the general custom to use oxen. Thus the Israelites were rescued from Egyptian bondage; and the sinner, in the day of conversion, is made free, rescued from the dominion of sin, the course of the law, and the tyranny of Satan.

PROVISION. "And I laid meat unto them;" as the husbandman does when his cattle are unyoked. Those who are drawn to God, and made free, have an appetite for spiritual provision. The food God gives to his people is

Suitable as to quality. Adapted to the soul's capacities and wants. Not that which perishes, but that which endures unto everlasting life. It is "laid unto them," brought nigh, in the covenant of mercy, the announcements of Scripture, the preaching of the Gospel, and the teaching of the Spirit.

Sufficient as to quantity. There is in the Gospel a rich abundance,

> "Enough for each, enough for all,
> Enough for evermore."

March 9.

DIVINE GUIDANCE.

"Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel."—Psalm lxxiii. 24.

RELIGION is the only source of true happiness; it yields us the purest pleasures in time, and reveals to us the brightest joys in eternity. It is a system admirably adapted to the immortal nature of man, and nothing else can restore us to primeval happiness. It enables its possessor to exercise unshaken confidence in God, both with regard to this world and that which is to come. Let us consider what God secures to his people in this life.

DIVINE GUIDANCE. How necessary is this! Many of our dangers we do not perceive till we have passed them. These arise from various sources; our inward corruptions, the stratagems of Satan, and the influence of the world. There is nothing so dangerous to our bodies, as the world is to our souls. How does God guide his people?

By the directions of his word. The Bible is our Divine chart; a map of the celestial as well as the terrestrial world: here are marked out in legible characters, the way we are to pursue, the innumerable dangers to which we are exposed, and the heavenly country to which we are bound. If we have not open manifestations of his presence, still we have the epistles of his love.

By the teaching of his Spirit. By nature we are wandering in error, but he guides us into all truth, and keeps us in the way everlasting. We must watch the motions and leadings of his Spirit; and thus seek Divine direction.

By the intimations of his providence. The Providence of God is to us what the pillar of cloud and fire was to the Israelites. We must not move when the cloud rests, nor remain stationary while it is in motion.

"Let the fiery, cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through."

March 10.

FUTURE GLORY.

"And afterwards receive me to glory."—Psalm lxxiii. 24.

The thoughts, contemplations, and desires of the generality of mankind are bounded by time, and riveted to earth; but not so with the Christian: he pursues a nobler course, breathes in a purer atmosphere, and is allured to brighter worlds; and, adopting the sentiment of Asaph, he exclaims, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." God ensures to his people

Future glory. Let us remark

The prospect. "Glory." Heaven is often thus described by way of eminence. It is glory's native seat. Every object and association connected with it is glorious. The condition to which we shall be raised, the powers with which we shall be endowed, the visions we shall behold, the discoveries we shall make, the occupations in which we shall be engaged, and the company with whom we shall mingle, all will be glorious.

The introduction. "Thou shalt receive me." Believers are first received into a state of grace, and then into a state of glory. They are received as an act of sovereign love and mercy, received with the approving smiles of God, the shouts of angelic hosts, and the welcome of redeemed spirits.

The period. "Afterward." Why does not God take his people to glory immediately on their conversion? To answer his own wise ends and purposes. They are instrumental in carrying on his cause on earth. He works in them at conversion, and by them afterward. Remember, then, it is in God's time you are to be taken home; heaven will be delightful when you are best prepared for it: the child would pluck the apple while it is green, but its taste would be more agreeable if he would wait till it is ripe. Glory will be yours, after your work is done, your graces tried, and your patience perfected.

"These glories shine and pleasures roll,
That charm, delight, transport—the soul;
And every panting wish shall be
Possessed of boundless bliss in Thee."

March 11.

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST.

"Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."—Rom. viii. 9.

This passage is familiar to the ear; but the question is, is its importance impressed on the heart? Note

The designation of the Spirit. "The Spirit of Christ." Why is he so called? Two reasons may be assigned:—First, as he is given to Christ, and that not by measure as to believers; secondly, as bestowed on the Christian in connection with the work of Christ.

The operations of the Spirit.

He enlightens the understanding in the knowledge of Christ. Till his heavenly beams shine into the soul, all is darkness; he glorifies the Saviour in our experience.

He captivates the affections with the love of Christ. He kindles the celestial flame of love in the cold, freezing soul; and it burns with a holy glow, and throws warmth and animation into our devotional exercises and religious engagements.

He inclines the will in obedience to Christ. No power short of that which he exerts can bend the proud spirit. There is no violence employed against the sinner; he is powerfully yet sweetly inclined; made willing in the day of God's power.

He forms the soul in the likeness of Christ. An interest in his sacrifice is always associated with a conformity to his image. As the wax must be melted before it can receive the impression of the seal; so the heart must be softened by the fire of the Spirit, ere it can receive the image of Christ.

The evidences of the Spirit. How may we know that we have received it? Those who have the Spirit of Christ within, will display the temper of Christ without. It is a spirit of humility, meekness, peace, love, and gentleness. Let the text be a touchstone to you, to try your dispositions, tempers, services, feelings, and all your actions.

"Oh! may a temper, meek and mild,
With gentle sway our souls possess;
Passion and pride be thence exiled,
And to be blest, still may we bless."

March 12.

ELIHU'S ADVICE TO JOB.

"Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: that which I see not, teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more."—Job xxxiv. 31, 32.

THE third petition in our Lord's prayer is soon uttered, but not easily felt—"Thy will be done." It is more difficult to suffer than to do the will of God; to lie passive at his feet, than to engage in the active duties of religion. We have before us part of Elihu's advice to Job in his afflictions. The sentiment it contains are worthy our notice.

LET US EXPLAIN THEM. Here are four things.

It is the language of submission. The word chastisement is in italics, which shows that it is not in the original; we may therefore refer this act of submission to any of those crosses with which the Almighty visits us. We should desire not so much the removal of the stroke, as the sanctification of the trial.

It is the language of confession. This is implied rather than expressed. "I will not offend any more." God shows us our sinfulness in our sufferings. Some will not be brought to the full confession of their guilt without the fiery trial of affliction.

It is the language of promise. "If I have done iniquity, I will do no more." Thus when the parent corrects the disobedient child, he not only requires of him a confession of his faults, but a promise of future good behavior.

It is the language of desire. "That which I see not, teach thou me." Prayer is like an arrow that pierces the dark clouds of affliction, and makes them break, with blessings, on the Christian's head; but the arrow will fall to the ground, unless the bow is strung and bent in a dependence on the power of the Spirit. Our afflictions are sent for our instruction. There are many things that we see not in the light of prosperity, but which are clearly discovered in the darkness of adversity. Christ has no disciple that is not introduced into the school of affliction.

LET US ENFORCE THEM. The propriety of such a course will appear.

When we consider our deserts. Should the sinner complain because he is a sufferer? Is it meet for the disobedient child to upbraid his father when he is correcting him for his faults?

When we consider God's designs. It is not for his pleasure, but our profit, that he afflicts us. Look at his power; who can resist him?—his sovereignty; who can question the order of his arrangements?—his wisdom; who can dispute it? The axe might be laid to the root in justice, but the pruning-knife is applied to the branch in mercy. It is a true sentiment, that God orders all his blackest providences in the world, like dark clouds, to be the watering-pots of the garden of his church, that the fruits and flowers of it may be brought to maturity.

March 13.

THE SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS.

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."—Rom. xv. 13.

Religion ennobles the character, exalts the feelings, and promotes the happiness of its possessor. It teaches him to cultivate a disinterested, kind, and benevolent spirit; such as Paul displayed. We have reviewed the nature and the measure of those blessings he desires for his friends; let us now contemplate

The source from whence they proceed. "The God of hope." He is the fountain of hope; its streams can only flow to us from him; he is the author and object of it; without him not one ray of hope can shine into the soul.

The means by which they are obtained. "In believing." Without faith we can have no acceptance with God, no comfort in the soul. The blessings to which we have referred are peculiar to believers; they cannot be enjoyed while we are in a natural state—faith gives us a capacity for the delightful feelings which they impart.

The agent by whom they are bestowed. "Through the power of the Holy Ghost." And what are we, what can we do, or feel, or enjoy without his power? He turns our darkness into light, pours the oil of joy and peace on the troubled soul, and produces a heavenly calm; this power makes us to abound in hope. Oh! shall we not invoke it? Blessed Spirit, exert thy power on me, bear thy testimony with me, and seal me thine to the day of redemption.

March 14.

ABUNDANCE OF SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS.

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."—Rom. xv. 13.

This is the best desire we can express on behalf of those whom we love and wish well to. Note

The blessings implored. They refer not to the wants of the body, but to those of the soul, the nobler part of our being. Let us, then, look at them.

Joy. This is a feeling the Gospel is designed and well calculated to impart—a joy that is solid in its foundation, reasonable in its nature, holy in its tendency, and lasting in its duration.

Peace. This blessing refers to the tranquillity of a conscience calmed by the blood of Christ; an inward composure and serenity of mind, arising from the delightful persuasion of our reconciliation to God. It results not from ignorance of our danger, but the knowledge of our safety.

Hope. The Christian's hope is not founded on the rotten basis of human merit, but the firm foundation of God's grace. It is heavenly in its origin, influences, and consummation.

The measure desired. Our danger is not in asking too much from God, but in expecting too little. Paul prays for the Romans,

That they might be filled with all joy and peace. There is a fulness and satisfaction in religion which the world can never yield. How much enjoyment in the divine life we lose by our indifference! We are often mourning in the valley of despondency, when we might be rejoicing on the mount of assurance; we are often driven backwards and forwards, and hindered in our progress, when we might be going full sail towards the destined port.

That they might abound in hope. The aboundings of hope produce feelings of joy. We may entertain a hope of heaven, and have a good hope, yet not be said to abound in it. It should be our first care to possess it, and then to have it more abundantly.

The Lord will hear us in his name,
Nor shall our hope be turned to shame.

March 15.

DELIGHT IN PRAYER.

"Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."—Psalm xxxvii. 4.

True piety, while it softens and humbles the soul, secures to the believer the most refined enjoyments. Let us contemplate the Christian's delight in prayer, three ways.

Its nature. It greatly differs from the false and delusive pleasures of the world.

It is a delight in the object of prayer—and that is God himself—in the perfections of his nature, the bounty of his providence, the discoveries of his word, and the blessings of his grace.

It is a delight in the medium of prayer—and that is Christ. We cannot approach the Father but through the mediation of the Son. Our prayers will have no sweet-smelling savor, unless they are perfumed with the incense of his sacrifice and intercession.

It is a delight in the exercise of prayer. The man who rejoices in God must delight in prayer; the seasons of devotion are reflected on, and anticipated by him with feelings of holy pleasure and delight.

Its source. It is not human but Divine. It springs

From the operations of the Spirit. If the soul is animated, and burns with devotion, it is he that enkindles the fire—the Spirit is the spring that moves us, the wind that blows on us, the power that influences us, and the light that illumines us.

From the supplies of grace. If the Spirit lights up the fire of devotion in the heart, grace is the oil that keeps it alive. We cannot delight in prayer if we are not spiritually quickened. Prayer without grace is prayer without wings.

From the reception of former favors. Those who have found mercy, and obtained help from God in the past, should delight in approaching him, that his gracious acts may be repeated.

Its advantages. They are inestimable, beyond calculation, and surpassing human conception. Prayer accomplishes wonders for the believer; it inspires him with lively emotions of joy, emboldens him in danger, supports him in the conflict, consoles

him in sorrow, animates him in death, and lights him to glory, where the language of prayer shall be exchanged for the shouts of praise.

March 16.

JUSTIFICATION.

"Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."—Rom. iii. 24.

It is delightful, when clear views and perceptions of Gospel truth are connected with the experimental enjoyment of its blessings, and a practical regard to its duties. The most important inquiry we can possibly make is, "How can man be just with God?" This passage furnishes us with a satisfactory answer. Note

What it is. With regard to justification, two things may be observed.

What it implies. There is the supposition of a charge preferred, and that charge is sin against God. There is not only the fact of alienation from God, but the act of enmity to God—thus we are under the law, and amenable to it.

What it includes. To be justified, is to be freed from imputed guilt, and thus released from threatened punishment. It is to be acquitted in the court of heaven, and to find acceptance with God.

How it is bestowed. "Freely by his grace." The agent is God himself; the source, "his grace," which is an overflowing fountain, sending forth the streams of light and life, love and joy, and every blessing. The manner is "freely"—as an act of Divine mercy, and not the fruit of human merit.

Whence it comes. "Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

He died to procure it. No price of less value than he paid could obtain our acquittal from punishment, and our acceptance with God; and the whole universe could not produce a more costly ransom.

He rose to insure it. When he died on the cross, justice arrested him with her strong arm; when he arose from the tomb, she led him forth with a smile, mingling her shouts with mercy's

triumphs; while wisdom, holiness, truth, and power, followed in the train.

He lives to confer it. He is exalted to the highest honors, and for the discharge of the most important work. Let me never seek to be justified at the tribunal of the law, alone; but take with me the Advocate, whose skill enables, and whose compassion will prompt him to plead my cause.

March 17.

DRAWING NIGH TO GOD.

"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you."—James iv. 8.

MAN by nature is far from God; by grace, he is brought near; and in glory he is nearest of all. The first is the miserable state of the unregenerate; the second is the happy condition of believers on earth; and the third is the triumphant destination of the saints in glory. In this passage, observe

WHAT IS REQUIRED OF US. It is to draw nigh to God.

The medium. We cannot approach him as an abstract God; sin has cut off the channel of communication between earth and heaven; so that all our transactions with the Divine Being must be carried on through the mediation of Christ. The Divine glory would overwhelm us; but Christ's flesh, as a veil, softens its brilliance, and takes away the edge of its brightness.

The means. We must draw nigh to God at the throne of grace, in the temple, in the scenes of meditation, and in all the divinely instituted ordinances.

The manner. It must be done in the exercise of faith—in the spirit of humility—with holy love and desire—and with godly fear and reverence.

The end. What have we to do with him? Much every way, both in rendering praise to him, and receiving benefits from him. Draw nigh to him as a Friend for help, a Father for compassion, a Master for instruction, a Physician for health, a Sun for light, and a Shield for protection.

WHAT IS INSURED TO US. "He will draw nigh to you." This promise may be regarded in

Its extent. He will draw nigh to supply our wants, forgive our sins, impart his grace, support us in every trying scene, and cheer us in the vale of death.

Its security. All this is insured from the testimony of his word, and the experience of every believer. Let me exclaim,

> "If thou, my Jesus, still be nigh,
> Cheerful I live, and joyful die:
> Secure when mortal comforts flee,
> To find ten thousand worlds in thee."

March 18.

MAN'S DEATH.

"What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death?"—Psalm lxxxix. 48.

SOLEMN words indeed—but how slight and transient is the impression they produce on the mind! Let us now contemplate

MAN'S DEATH. Four things may be noticed with respect to death.

It is solemn in its nature. Death is a separation between the soul and body, the material and immaterial part of our being. It terminates the period of our probation here. It is a sleep from which the believer shall awake to immortal glory; the Divine promises are the pillows on which he rests; and the voice of his Redeemer shall arouse him from his sweet repose at the last day.

It is certain in its approach. This is implied in the passage before us; and it is evident from the appointment of God, and from the principles of which the human body is composed, which are perishing, and tend to decay. We live among the ruins of past generations, and tread upon the graves of the departed. Beneath our feet is the scattered dust of many a dissolved tabernacle, whose inhabitant has long since passed into eternity. We have the announcement of death in the Bible, and the sentence of death in ourselves.

It is universal in its extent. Death passes on all men; because the contaminating influence of sin has overspread the human family. It regards neither the bloom of youth, nor

the wrinkles of age; the rags of the poor, nor the robes of the rich.

It is eternal in its consequences. Then our destinies will be irrevocably fixed; and death will conduct us either to the joys of the blessed in heaven, or to the torments of the lost in hell. Let us familiarize ourselves with the subject of death. This will slope our way to the tomb, and by dying daily, we shall at last die peacefully. It has been beautifully remarked, that meditation on death will give a grand and mellow tint to our habits of thinking; as a great ocean exposed to the rising sun borrows from its edge to the farthest bound of waters, a celestial glow of light.

March 19.

THE SAFETY OF BELIEVERS.

"My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."—John x. 29.

Jesus the good Shepherd is here speaking of the safety of his people, who are the sheep of his pasture. Note

A pleasing truth stated. The gift of a people to Christ. They are given to be redeemed by his power, washed in his blood, sanctified by his Spirit, enriched by his grace, and conformed to his image—given to him as a reward, his triumph, and his joy—given to him as jewels to deck his crown, as subjects to people his empire, as children to obey his commands. They have many marks belonging to them, by which they are distinguished from the world.

A painful fact implied. Attempts are made to deprive Christ of his people. Our enemies are numerous and powerful. There is a deceitful heart within, and a wicked world without.

"How oft have sin and Satan strove
To rend my soul from thee, my God."

An encouraging assurance given. "No man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Their safety is insured from

The power of God. "My Father, which gave them me, is

greater than all;" greater than all the friends or enemies of the Church. For man to strive with God, is weakness itself contending with Omnipotence. The hearts of all men, as well as the elements of nature, are under his control.

The love of God. The power of the Almighty proves he can defend his people, and his love assures us that he will.

The purpose of God. As a mighty rock in the midst of the ocean, surrounded by the tumultuous waters and the foaming billows, remains unmoved, so the purposes of God are fixed and unalterable; and his glorious designs shall be fulfilled, notwithstanding the rage and fury, pride and passion, of those who oppose him. Let the friends of the Redeemer rejoice in their safety, and live near to God; but let his enemies tremble, and turn from their evil ways.

March 20.

PERSONAL DEDICATION TO GOD.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." —Rom. xii. 1.

Amidst all the darkness with which sin has overspread our moral atmosphere, there are some rays of light darting from above, to penetrate the gloom, and assure us that our restoration to the image, favor, and friendship of Jehovah may be effected; and there is required on our part a personal dedication to that Being from whom we have so deeply revolted. Three things may be observed in this passage.

The duty it enjoins. It is the presentation of a sacrifice to God; not an expiatory but an eucharistical one; not an offering of atonement for sin, but of acknowledgment for a Saviour.

Its nature. "Your bodies." But why is not the soul mentioned? The inferior part of our system is expressly named, to show that nothing is to be kept back from God; we must surrender the meaner as well as the nobler part of our nature; the members of the body as well as the powers of the mind; the casket as well as the jewel.

Its property. "A living sacrifice." Not the dead body of a

formal profession, but the living soul of spiritual devotion. How many are there, who, instead of presenting to God the ardor and vigor of their youth, a lively offering, give him their hoary hairs, grown gray in Satan's service, and thus drag the sacrifice to the altar, after it has lost its animating power!

The direction it affords. It must be voluntary; "that ye present your bodies." There is no constraint, but the love of Christ; no compulsion, but the power of the Spirit. It must be "holy." Personal holiness, and purity of motive and design, are required in every true worshipper of God.

The motives it supplies. There is the gentleness of Paul's appeal. "I beseech you, brethren." The mildness of affection will do that which the rage of passion never can accomplish. The human heart is better taken in a calm than in a storm. "The mercies of God" should lead us to this act of self-dedication. Here is a fine field for our contemplation; let us range in it, admiring the loveliness and variety of its objects till we feel ourselves constrained to erect our altar, and present our sacrifice. Another motive is, that such an offering "shall be acceptable unto God;" and it can only be through the mediation and merit of our great High Priest. Lastly, we are urged by the reasonableness of religion. The word translated "reasonable service," may be rendered, "logical worship:" it is so, as it agrees with all the principles of sound reason, as well as the precepts of sacred revelation.

March 21.

MAN'S LIFE.

"What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death?"—Psalm lxxxix. 48.

We have much to lead us to a consideration of our latter end. Time, in its measured portions, is continually wearing away; there is an annual death in nature; day after day sinks into the grave of night, and a solemn voice re-echoes from the hollow sepulchre, "What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death?" Let us contemplate

Man's life. It may be regarded in many points of view.

Its sorrows. The time of our life is like the ocean in a storm,

where one wave rolls incessantly upon another. What trying scenes! what painful anxieties! "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward."

Its uncertainty. Dangers surround us, both seen and unseen: death lurks in secret ambush, and often rushes on his prey without a moment's warning. All around us ministers to our destruction: the air we breathe is big with death—the medicine that purifies, exhausts—the labors in which we engage, enfeeble us—and we are hastening to the house appointed for all living.

Its shortness. We have noticed the shadow swiftly passing along the ground in a cloudy day, suddenly darkening the places irradiated before by the beams of the sun, but as quickly disappearing. Such is the life of man; for he fleeth as a shadow, and continueth not.

Its value. Who can estimate it aright? How sublime are the purposes for which it is given! It is the day of salvation; it is the golden season when grace may be obtained; it is the period when the ship of the Gospel lies in our harbor, bound for Immanuel's land, waiting to take us in as passengers to that port of peace. Its allotted portions can never be remeasured; no rhetoric can recall time past; no price can redeem it. Improve it, therefore, by applying your heart unto wisdom.

March 22.

HYPOCRISY AND PENITENCE.

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."—Prov. xxviii. 13.

This passage bears two aspects; terror to the wicked and joy to the righteous. It is like the pillar of cloud and fire, with the dark side towards the Egyptians, but the bright side towards the Israelites. Note

The contrasted characters. Let us look at each.

The hypocrite. "He that covereth his sins." Some commit evil openly, others secretly; but none can escape the scrutinizing eye of Omniscience. In how many ways do men cover their sins; by palliation, or denial, and sometimes with the cloak of religion and friendship!

The penitent. Two things are stated of him; he confesses and forsakes his sins: the one more particularly regards the heart, the other the life; the one includes genuine repentance, the other practical reformation. If a new principle has been implanted, old things must pass away, old lusts be mortified, old pursuits abandoned, and old companions discarded.

THE DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES. What is said of these two characters? Observe

The misery of the one. "He shall not prosper." But do we not often see the wicked rolling in wealth and affluence; extending their connections, credit, and influence in the world, and increasing in their temporal comforts? Yes, but all this may be the case when misery and wretchedness possess the heart, and there is no favor from God, no peace of conscience, and no hope for eternity.

The happiness of the other. "He shall have mercy." This is what we want: our state is one of misery, and requires the exercise of mercy; mercy to pardon our sins, renew our minds, cleanse our hearts, and enrich us with grace here and glory hereafter.

"Let deep repentance, faith, and love,
Be joined with godly fear,
And all our conversation prove
Our hearts to be sincere."

March 23.

CHRIST'S GRACE SUFFICIENT.

"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness."—2 Cor. xii. 9.

PAUL had this assurance from God for his comfort under trials, and every believer has the same. Note

THE CHRISTIAN'S WEAKNESS. This fact is assumed in the passage before us. We need not bring forward arguments to prove it; for we have evidences of it in our every day's experience. Our weakness is seen in the discharge of duties, and the endurance of trials; it is implied in the promises of Scripture, for while they reveal our privileges, they remind us of our weakness and imperfections; and it is acknowledged before God in our prayers.

THE SAVIOUR'S STRENGTH. "My strength is made perfect in weakness;" that is, in thy weakness my power is more evident. This is the case in those things in which there appears no resemblance between the agency and the instrumentality—such as the dividing of the waters of the Red Sea, by the stretching forth of the hand of Moses; and the falling of the walls of Jericho, by the blowing of the rams' horns. The grace of Christ is sufficient for all things—for our work and warfare, our duties and dangers.

To justify our persons. There is no guilt he cannot expiate; no corruption he cannot subdue; no crime, however atrocious, that he cannot pardon.

To sanctify our natures. While his grace pardons sin, it purifies the sinner, and extends its cleansing influence over all the powers and passions of the mind.

To aid us in duty. Our religious performances will be dead and dull, without the life-giving power of his grace; but with it we shall be enabled cheerfully to fulfil the duties that devolve on us, however arduous and difficult.

To support us in trials. In Christ there is an ocean of grace, from which the streams of consolation abundantly flow into the believer's heart; so that, while his comforts are sweetened, his sorrows are soothed, and his happy spirit aspires to that blissful land where the bitter waters of affliction shall never mingle with the pure and perennial springs of the river of life. Let me pray for a deeper sense of my own weakness, and a firmer reliance on Christ's strength.

March 24.

THE INSUFFICIENCY OF EXTERNAL RITES.

"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."—Gal. vi. 15.

PAUL, in his letter to the Galatians, warns them against a reliance on superficial notions and creeds. In the passage before us, note

EVERY CHRISTIAN IS A NEW CREATURE. This is a doctrine of paramount importance, as it involves the first principles, and is associated with our last supports in religion. In what respects is

he a new creature? Morally, not physically. New faculties are not given to the soul, but those faculties have new qualities. Contemplate this new creation in three ways.

Its extent. It affects all the powers of the mind—the understanding is enlightened, the judgment is rectified, the will subdued, the affections purified, the conscience changed; and this is discovered in its tenderness, its composure, its admonitions to duty, and its reproofs for sin.

Its source. None can renew the soul, but that Divine Being who at first created the world. The Divine image being defaced from the soul of man, the finger of God alone can retrace the glorious lineaments; and this he does by the enlightening and transforming power of his Holy Spirit.

Its manner. There is much mystery in the mode of the Spirit's operations on the heart. It is compared to the falling of the dew, and the blowing of the wind; the effects of which we see, and the causes of which we know, but cannot understand their precise manner. With regard to the new birth, the change is instantaneous, though the development is gradual. Look to the fields, "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear."

NOTHING SHORT OF THIS NEW CREATION WILL AVAIL. The meaning of the verse is simply this: In the Gospel dispensation, neither the circumcision of the Jew, nor the uncircumcision of the Gentile, will avail anything towards our acceptance with God, but a new creature, a mighty change produced in the heart. All outward forms in religion will prove utterly unavailing, if there is the absence of genuine godliness and unfeigned piety. The water may be sprinkled on the face in baptism, the name of Christ may be in the mouth by religious profession, the bread and wine in the lips at the Lord's supper, while Christ is not formed in the heart. Let the subject lead us to self-examination and serious reflection.

Not all our groans and tears,
  Nor works which we have done,
Nor vows, nor promises, nor prayers,
  Can e'er for sin atone.

Relief alone is found
  In Jesus' precious blood:
'Tis this that heals the mortal wound,
  And reconciles to God.

March 25.

THE GREATNESS OF DIVINE GOODNESS.

"How great is his goodness!"—Zech. ix. 17.

THERE is a greatness and grandeur in all the perfections of God; but his goodness makes his whole character amiable and lovely. Let us notice

THE SCENES OF GOD'S GOODNESS. When do we behold it?

When we gaze on the cross. The Almighty furnished many evidences of it in the remarkable interpositions of his providence with regard to the Israelites; but these are not to be compared with the wonderful display of that goodness in the Gospel. Here, in the cross, his majesty is overpowered by his mercy, and his grandeur is softened down by his goodness.

When we look into our hearts. Believers, when they draw the contrast between their past and present condition; when they think of the new heart God has given them, and the holy desires he has planted within them, have reason to exclaim, "How great is his goodness!"

When we come to the temple. Here his goodness is made known, and his mercy is displayed. It is seen in the provisions of the Gospel, so suitable in their nature, and so abundant in their quantity.

When we think of heaven. What happiness is in reserve for God's children above, after they had done and suffered his will below! Look beyond the scenes and circumstances, sufferings and sorrows of time, to the joys and triumphs of eternity—and when you think of the flowing river, the shining pavement, the golden harps, and the never-fading crowns, can you forbear exclaiming, "How great is his goodness!"

THE FEELINGS WITH WHICH IT SHOULD BE CONTEMPLATED. It should be with wonder and astonishment, joy and triumph, love and ardor, gratitude and praise. The unbeliever, as well as the Christian, may adopt the language, "How great is his goodness!" in sparing the lives of those who are rebelling against him, and treating his ordinances with contempt.

Amazing love, that yet will call,
And yet prolong our days!
Our hearts, subdued by goodness, fall,
And weep, and love, and praise.

March 26.

THE BELIEVER'S UNION TO CHRIST.

"For ye are all one in Christ Jesus."—Gal. iii. 28.

CHRISTIANITY is a system of peace; it is designed to effect peace between God and man, and teaches us to be at peace among ourselves. Let us observe in this passage

THE UNION OF EACH BELIEVER TO CHRIST. A state of grace is often described as being "in Christ."

It is a spiritual union. All the professors of religion are nominally united to Christ, but there may be a visible connection without a vital union. To be in Christ is to have the heart changed, to be interested in him, to love him, trust in him, delight in him, and find our all in him. This union is effected by the Spirit; connected with spiritual objects, feelings, desires, and enjoyments.

It is a close union. It is compared to the vine and the branches, the head and the members, and the foundation-stone and the building. It is to be "partakers of the Divine nature;" to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, to grow up into him, to imbibe his Spirit, and hold the most intimate communion with him.

It is an eternal union. Death dissolves all human ties, however tender and endearing, and parts the nearest friends; but he has no power over this union. The body and soul must part; but Christ and the believer shall never be separated.

THE UNITY OF ALL BELIEVERS IN CHRIST. Note: though there are shades of difference in their views of Divine truth, they are all agreed in the grand essentials. Christ is the great object of attraction—the centre where they all meet—the circle around which all their desires revolve—the sea of love, under whose shining waves they delight to plunge. Christians, in what respects are we all one?

One Lord is above us. We acknowledge none but Christ as our Head; and to him we bow, in his service we engage, and to his tribunal we are amenable.

One righteousness is upon us. As a robe, not only to cover and defend, but to adorn and beautify us. We rely on the same atonement, build on the same foundation, plead the same merits, and receive of the same fulness.

One Spirit is within us. Into this Spirit we drink. The Holy Ghost dwells in the hearts of all God's people, as in a temple. There is in them a oneness of principle, desire, motive, pursuit, and end.

One home is before us. Believers are as so many members of one family; millions have reached their Father's house, and multitudes are now on their way thither. How desirable is it that they should cultivate feelings of love and harmony, "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace!"

March 27.

THE PRIVILEGE ACKNOWLEDGED.

"For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."—Acts iv. 20.

THIS is the language of Peter and John, when examined before the Jewish sanhedrim, and commanded not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus. Note,

THE THINGS TO WHICH THEY REFER. They are of two classes—

What they had seen. They had witnessed God manifested in the flesh; they had seen him perform the most astonishing miracles, by which he clearly proved his Godhead; walking on the mighty ocean, stilling the tempest, having the elements of nature under his control, pouring the beams of light into the eyelids of the blind, giving strength to the weak, awaking the dead from the slumbers of the tomb. They had seen the zeal and activity he displayed in his Father's work, his patience under the most trying provocations, the cruelty inflicted on him by his enemies; they had witnessed his agonies in the garden, and his sufferings on the cross; his triumph over death and his glorious ascension, when he led them out as far as to Bethany, and was parted from them while he blessed them.

What they had heard. They had listened to the sweet accents of mercy, gently flowing from his lips; his doctrine dropping as the rain, and his speech distilling as the dew; the testimony of the Father, who declared himself well pleased; his own sorrowful words when agonized in his soul; his part-

ing benediction and solemn charge to preach the Gospel,—and could they be silent? They were greatly privileged in being his friends and companions. We cannot thus know him after the flesh, or enjoy his bodily presence; but we may obtain a spiritual knowledge of him, and realize the tokens of his grace.

March 28.

SPIRITUAL FREEDOM.

"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."—John viii. 36.

How much does religion effect on our behalf! It finds us in darkness, and gives us light. It sees us in poverty, and confers on us riches. It views us as slaves, and pronounces us free. Observe here the nature and excellency of that freedom which the Saviour effects.

Its NATURE. The promise of freedom supposes the existence of slavery. The Jews denied that they were in bondage; how false the assertion! Read their history, and you will find that they were in bondage to the Egyptians, and several of the neighboring nations. The sinner is in a state of captivity, but does not like to acknowledge it. Christ makes us free

From the bondage of condemnation. Sin binds its victim over to punishment; and he is as a condemned criminal, held by the strong arm of the law. This is the case, till Christ as our Surety, releases us.

From the bondage of corruption. Grace first establishes purity of principle, and then holiness of life and conduct follow as the certain result. Thus while the Saviour changes our state, he transforms our nature.

Its EXCELLENCY. Let us advert to some properties belonging to it.

It is real. "Ye shall be free indeed." The philosopher carries us through mazes of uncertainty; the statesman forms plans and projects that never take place, the speculating adventurer dreams of success in the midst of disappointments, and builds many a castle in the air. But it is not so here, all is reality.

It is spiritual. It is the redemption of the soul, the renewal of the mind, and the spirit of life. Men in all ages have endeavored to secularize religion; but it should ever be remembered that its origin, nature, principle, and tendency are all spiritual.

It is glorious. Thus we read of "the glorious liberty of the children of God." A glorious conquest is achieved over the tyrants who held you in subjection; a glorious change is produced in your condition, and a glorious crown awaits you in heaven.

It is permanent. The united force of earth and hell, men and devils, cannot make those slaves whom Jesus has made free. Are we the subjects of this happy state?

March 29.

GOD'S HIDDEN ONES.

"Thy hidden ones."—Psalm lxxxiii. 3.

Many titles are given to the people of God. They are his peculiar treasure, his portion, his lot, and his inheritance—a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, the excellent of the earth, and the lights of the world. Here they are designated his "hidden ones." Let us look at

Their peculiar character. The term "hidden" may be understood in two senses.

As it regards their concealment. They are hidden from the world in several respects. In their origin, for they are born from above—in their principles, for they act not according to the course of the world—in their sorrows, for there is a silent warfare going on within, two antagonists contending for the mastery of the soul—in their joys, for a stranger to divine things intermeddleth not therewith—in their food, for they have hidden manna, and meat to eat which the world knows not of—in their prospects, for it doth not yet appear what they shall be—"Our life is hid with Christ in God." They are hidden

With respect to their security. So the word is used in the

parable of the man who hid the treasure in the field. Where are believers hidden? In the purposes of God—in his heart—in his covenant—in his promises—in his hand. He hides them in the time of temptation—in the season of affliction—in the tempests of life, and in the swellings of Jordan. Let us view them in

THEIR DIVINE OWNER. "*Thy* hidden ones." They are not their own: they are the Lord's, in common with the rest of mankind, by his creating power and preserving care—but peculiarly as they are chosen in his councils, called by his grace, sanctified by his Spirit, devoted to his glory, and bound for his kingdom. He acknowledges them as his own in various ways in this world, and "they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels." Though hidden now, they shall not be so always; for there shall be a "manifestation of the sons of God."

March 30.

SETTING THE LORD ALWAYS BEFORE US.

"I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."—Psalm xvi. 8.

THESE words have a threefold reference, and may be viewed as applying literally to David, typically to Christ, and spiritually to the believer. We shall consider them in the latter sense. Note

THE COURSE ADOPTED. Setting the Lord before us implies

Recognition. As if he had said, I will cherish an abiding sense of the divine presence. It is well when the mind is duly affected with this; we cannot indulge in levity; the tone of our feelings will be raised, and we shall be constrained to seriousness.

Admiration. The sinner sets God behind him, and the world before him; but it is just the reverse with the believer; God is the supreme object of his regard, and everything else is of secondary consideration.

Imitation. We are to set the Lord before us, as the scholar does the copy for his direction. Though there is much in

the Divine character that is inimitable, yet there are many things in his natural perfections in which we may be followers of him.

Duration. This is to be done "always." In retirement, by spiritual meditation; in the social circle, by religious conversation; in relative duties, devotional engagements, commercial transactions, and in all that concerns us. We are to set his will before us as the rule of our faith and practice, his perfections for our imitation, his promises for our encouragement, his sufficiency for our support, and his glory for our end.

THE CONFIDENCE EXPRESSED. This may be noticed in

Its nature. "I shall not be moved." His faith should not be destroyed, though it might be shaken. He should remain firm amidst the storms and tempests that gather around him. In the same sense Paul said, "None of these things move me."

Its ground. "Because he is at my right hand;" near to strengthen and support me, to enliven my hopes, and dispel my fears.

March 31.

DELIVERANCE FROM TEMPTATION.

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation."—2 Peter ii. 9.

PETER had his trials and afflictions; he had much to endure from the united hostility of spiritual enemies against the empire of grace in his heart: he was, therefore, well able to speak on this subject. In this passage we are led to view Christians in three ways:—

THEIR PECULIAR CHARACTER. "The godly." They are so called,

Because they are born of God. They are the subjects of a new creation; they have new principles, new desires, and new affections planted in them; and the saving change they have experienced has been effected by God.

Because they are made like God. When this new birth takes place, they are made partakers of the Divine nature, and conformed to the Divine image. They resemble God, not only as a picture does the original, in the external lineaments, but as a child does the father; being of the same nature, and, as it were, one body with him.

Because they live to God. This naturally follows, for to this end were they born again. Where the image of Christ is impressed on the soul, the example of Christ will be copied in the life.

THEIR VARIOUS TRIALS. The Apostle here alludes to the temptations of the godly; and from how many sources do they spring! Our treacherous hearts deceive us; Satan suggests a thousand things to perplex the mind; there are outward objects; these often flatter and fascinate; there are strong temptations to lose sight of the high distinctions and obligations of the Christian character, and imbibe a worldly spirit. By all these God is trying his people.

THEIR DIVINE SUPPORTS. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations." Can he know their trials without relieving them? Their final deliverance may be argued from his knowledge, his word of promise, his love, his purposes, his honor, and his grace. All this is very consolatory to the Christian; but how terrific is the latter clause of the verse:—"The Lord knoweth how to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." The one is like the serene and azure sky that bespeaks fair weather; the other resembles the thunder-cloud that precedes the desolating storm.

April 1.

CHRISTIAN MEDITATION.

"We thought of thy loving-kindness, O God! in the midst of thy temple."
Psalm xlviii. 9.

THESE are the words of David, and they accord with the sentiments and feelings of every true Christian. In them observe

A SACRED EXERCISE. Namely, Christian meditation.

It is an important duty. It is requisite for the formation of your Christian character, and your improvement in spiritual things. Reading, hearing, and the other exercises of religion, will be lost without holy meditation.

It is connected with difficulty. What! is it hard to think? Yes; there must be mental discipline. The powers of the mind

must be brought to bear on holy objects. It is not a mere glance, a passing thought, or a hasty view, bnt a calm, steady, and deliberate contemplation.

It is associated with pleasure. Isaac felt it when he left the scenes of domestic intercourse, and went out into the field to meditate. David, amidst the splendors of royalty, could say, "My meditation of him shall be sweet; while I was musing, the fire burned."

It is attended with profit. By sacred meditation we ascend a high mountain, from whence we view the surrounding landscape; the higher we rise, the more do heavenly objects increase in magnitude, while the world and earthly scenes diminish in our view. But we have here

A DELIGHTFUL SUBJECT. The loving-kindness of God.

How vast! It includes more than the mind of man can grasp. Where is it to be seen? In creation, providence, and redemption. Refer to your own personal history; in how many instances do you see the loving-kindness of God displayed!

How interesting! We have thought—on what? On thy justice and vengeance? On the punishment inflicted on thine enemies? No: on something more encouraging and delightful to the mind—the exhibitions of Almighty love.

How elevating! Some things degrade the mind, but this ennobles it. In meditating on this subject, where are you? Walking with God; your communion is with the Father, and your conversation is in heaven.

A FAVORABLE SPOT. "In the midst of thy temple." There is

The cessation of occupations that would tend to prevent it. The objects of the world are hindrances to this sacred exercise, but there they are withdrawn: a solemn silence pervades the assembly, that bespeaks holy engagements.

The celebration of ordinances that are calculated to promote it. There is the Bible, which is a light shining in a dark place; there is the herald of the cross to unfold its truths; there are prayers and praises ascending to the throne above. Oh! who feels properly impressed under a sense of the Divine presence?

O, may we feel this quickening power,
To warm and cheer our hearts.

April 2.

THE RANSOM OF CHRIST.

"Thou wast slain."—Rev. v. 9.

JOHN was highly favored of God: he had a vision of the glories of the heavenly world. The revelation God gave to him he has given to us. He was in the Spirit, a door was opened in heaven; he beheld a throne of great magnificence; around it were four-and-twenty seats, and upon the seats four-and-twenty elders clothed in white raiment, and crowned with diadems of gold; in the midst of it was a Lamb, as it had been slain; he heard the song that was celebrated; part of which we have before us. Here is

A SACRIFICE OFFERED. "Thou wast slain." Contemplate

The dignified Victim. "Thou." Creation has a voice, and speaks his glory. We see him in the splendors of the orbs of light above us; but when we look on him as shining in the firmament of the Father's love, we behold him in his highest glory,—essential Godhead and real manhood united. We might compare him to a thousand things in nature; he is the Rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the valley, the Plant of renown, the bright and morning Star, the Sun of righteousness, and the Light of the world.

The mode of oblation. "Thou wast slain." Here is an evident reference to the Jewish sacrifices, which typified the atonement of Christ; the priests under the law were as so many twinkling stars that disappeared at the bright shining of the Sun of righteousness. As he increased, they decreased. He was slain by the appointment of the Father, through the instrumentality of his enemies, and with his own consent. Let it be our desire to be found interested in him, that we may unite in the songs of the redeemed below, and in their anthems above.

"Worthy the Lamb that died," they cry,
"To be exalted thus:"
"Worthy the Lamb," our lips reply,
"For he was slain for us."

April 3.

PETER'S VISIT TO CORNELIUS.

"Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God."—Acts x. 33.

Such was the language of Cornelius, the centurion, to Peter. Here we have an account of the first Gentile congregation.

Their numerous attendance. Everything deserves our notice here.

The place where they met. It was in the house of a soldier. How delightful to see those who are enlisted in the military service of their country, fighting under the banners of the cross, and bowing to the Captain of our salvation! Cornelius's had been a house of prayer, but now it was made a house of preaching. It is not the architectural grandeur of the building that invites or secures the Divine presence, but the fervor and sincerity of the worshippers.

The circumstances under which they were assembled. They were peculiarly interesting, and are recorded at length in this chapter. The Gospel message was now to be delivered to the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, by the mouth of Peter.

The numbers in which they came together. "Now therefore are we all here present." Cornelius invited his kinsmen and near friends to hear Peter's sermon. A Christian does not want to go to heaven alone. "O Sir!" exclaimed a woman to Whitefield, "come and preach under my roof; I have a house that will hold a hundred, and a heart that will contain a thousand."

Their devout feelings. They regarded themselves as in the Divine presence: "before God." The reality of God's presence, and the realization of it, are two things. In the sanctuary we are before an all-seeing God, and this should solemnize our minds; we are before a merciful God, and this should rejoice our hearts; we are before a faithful God, and this should inspire our confidence; we are before an all-sufficient God, and this should raise our expectations. We come to the mighty God, and not to feeble man; to the Rock of ages, and not to the bending reed; to the living Fountain, and not to the running stream; to the boundless ocean, and not to a broken cistern.

THEIR AVOWED OBJECT. "To hear all things that are commanded thee of God." There was on their part

A desire to listen to the Gospel. They came "to hear." How many visit the sanctuary to see and be seen! Knowledge, faith, love, and joy, come by hearing.

An acknowledgment of the Divine authority of the ministry. They came to hear "all things commanded of God." Ministers speak not in their own name, or by their own authority, but are ambassadors from the court of heaven.

An impartial regard to the whole system of truth. "All things." As the heralds of salvation must declare, so their hearers must receive, the whole counsel of God. Let us be thankful for the privilege of coming before God in the sanctuary below, and anticipate with joy the period when we shall appear before him in the temple above.

April 4.

THE REDEMPTION OF THE CHRISTIAN.

"And hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."—Rev. v. 9.

THIS is part of the new song celebrated by millions of beatified spirits in glory. Observe

THE REDEMPTION SECURED. This is the glorious result of a gracious cause.

The ransom paid. "Thy blood." Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin." The divinity of Christ communicated an unknown value to every word of his mouth, every touch of his hand, every tear of his eye, every groan of his heart, and every drop of his blood. Christian, when you contemplate your privileges, think of the blood by which they were procured; and when you rejoice in prospect of the glorious inheritance beyond the skies, remember that it is a purchased possession.

The blessing procured. "Hast redeemed us to God." Redemption includes liberty;—Jesus opens the prison doors to them that are bound, and liberates the captives. It includes holiness. The heart is sanctified, and is a temple of the Holy Ghost. It includes happiness. All that are redeemed to God

are made happy; they have the elements of happiness within them: thus they are emancipated from the dominion of sin;—they have a gradual ascendency over its influence; and ere long they shall be completely delivered from its very existence, and then shall their happiness receive its final consummation. What returns have we made for love so amazing as that manifested by our Saviour? If he laid down his life for us, shall we not consecrate our lives to him? O my soul! retire to the throne of grace,—the cross of Calvary, and beneath its sacred shade present thy sacrifice.

April 5.

THE NECESSITY AVOWED.

"For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."—Acts iv. 20.

RELIGION inspires its possessor with true fortitude; we have an instance of this in the case of Peter and John before us, whose boldness excited the astonishment of the Jewish counsel. Note

THE NECESSITY THEY AVOWED. It was as if they had said, If we hold our peace, where will be our love to our Divine Master, and our obedience to his commands? how will sinners know his grace? Satan will triumph, God will be left without a witness, and the very stones will cry out. And what have we seen and heard? Necessity is laid on us; duty requires, and our profession demands, that we remain not silent. There are many powerful motives that should induce us to this.

The great importance of the things themselves. What is Christianity? It is not a fable or a fiction; it is not a pleasing tale, intended to interest the mind and divert the fancy; it is not a cold system in philosophy, concerning which it is a matter of indifference whether we are acquainted with it or not. It is identified with the interests of the soul for immortality; it is our only hope, our only source of joy; it is life eternal. Can we be silent on such topics as these?

The goodness of God in revealing them to us. The criminal who receives forgiveness, cannot but speak of the royal bounty; the man who is rescued from some imminent danger,

by the timely interposition of a stranger, cannot but celebrate his kindness. This, however, gives us but a faint view of the obligations of the Christian, who has been raised from the depth of degradation, and elevated to the pinnacle of Divine honors.

The benefit we may confer on others by disclosing them. Every Christian should be a preacher, by a verbal, practical, and passive testimony to the truth. If we feel aright, and are constrained by the love of Christ, we cannot remain silent on the glorious things of God while surrounded by multitudes, to whom, by our seasonable exertions, we might be useful in plucking them as brands from the fire.

April 6.

THE CHRISTIAN'S FEARS AND ENCOURAGEMENTS.

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."—Isa. xli. 10.

THE promises of God are numerous, like stars bespangling the firmament of revelation; diversified, as they extend to every case; exceeding great in the blessings to which they refer; precious as applied by faith; and secure, as they rest on the basis of immutable truth. Here is a very comprehensive one. Contemplate the believer in

THE CAUSE OF HIS FEARS. They arise from various sources.

Temporal trials. We shall form a very wrong estimate if we judge of God's love by the gifts of his providence; he sometimes confers least on those he loves most; and we cannot tell how his heart is inclined, by looking at his hand. Many have the smiles of his providence who have not the light of his countenance.

Spiritual conflicts. How many clouds of guilt and unbelief gather around us, and for a season obscure our prospects! There are two antagonist principles within, corruption and grace, and these are continually warring with each other: so that the Christian is often the subject of agitation and fear.

THE GROUND OF HIS ENCOURAGEMENT. It is three-fold.

The Divine presence we have with us. "I am with thee." Is

not this enough to dispel our fears, and scatter our doubts? Think of the perfections of his nature, the vigilance of his eye, the power of his arm, and the pity of his heart.

The covenant relation he sustains to us. "I am thy God." This he is in a peculiar sense to his people; not only as they are created by his power, and sustained by his providence, but as they are redeemed by his grace.

The gracious acts he performs for us. He imparts strength, because we are weak; and he affords help in our need. He will uphold us when we are ready to sink, with the right hand of his righteousness; that hand of righteous retribution with which he confers pardon on the penitent, and inflicts punishment on hardened, obdurate sinners.

April 7.

CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

"For I am determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified."—1 Cor. ii. 2.

This passage shows us the subject in which Paul felt the deepest interest, and on which he most delighted to dwell. Note

A GLORIOUS SCENE EXHIBITED TO OUR VIEW. Christ crucified. And what do we see here?

Promises and prophecies accomplished. These appear more like the minute details of historical events than prophetic declarations; thus, the promises are beautifully linked with the fulfilment; and the prophet and evangelist appear on the field of truth, seeing eye to eye, and embracing hand in hand.

Types and shadows fulfilled. All the splendid retinue of Sewish services and sacrifices were preparatory to, and figurative of, the great atoning sacrifice of Jesus, presented at the dedication of the gospel temple; when he expired, it was finished.

The evil of sin discovered. It appeared odious when our first parents were driven out of paradise, when the old world was destroyed, and when the cities of the plain were consumed; but in the cross of Christ it is exceedingly sinful. There, while Divine love appears in its brightest form, human depravity assumes its deepest dye.

The justice of God vindicated. The sword of Divine wrath was sheathed in the bosom of Christ as our Surety; and when he expired, full satisfaction was received, and not a spot or stain appears to tarnish its lustre. The Almighty sustains his character as a just God, and yet is known as a justifier of believing sinners.

The riches of grace manifested. If we are terrified by the lightnings and tempests of Sinai, we retire to the milder atmosphere of Calvary, the darkness is dispersed, and we hear the voice of love and mercy.

The kingdom of Satan ruined. In the field of battle, he who obtains a victory does not conquer by death; but Jesus, "through death, has destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

The salvation of man completed. This was the amazing work he came to perform, and he left not our world till he had fully accomplished it. We have seen this great sight; now let us notice

THE MANNER IN WHICH IT SHOULD BE REGARDED. While you are thus looking to Christ crucified, mourn over the greatness of your sins, wonder at the extent of his love, believe in the efficacy of his cross, and implore the agency of his Spirit; and then the theme of your contemplation on earth shall be the burden of your song in heaven.

April 8.

THE LAMB OF GOD.

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."—John i. 29.

THE Gospel is superior to the law, as the substance is to the shadow, or the sun in his meridian splendor, to the first glimmerings of day. In the one we catch some faint glimpses of the glory and grace of the Redeemer; in the other, we get a clear and full view of them, Two things may be noticed concerning the Saviour, in the passage before us.

HIS GLORIOUS CHARACTER. "The Lamb of God." Here is

The figure employed. A lamb. Look at its nature; how meek, innocent, and gentle! Will not this apply to Jesus? Its

usefulness, for food and clothing. Thus in Christ we have the bread of life, and the robe of righteousness. Its typical reference. Under the law of Moses, a lamb was offered every morning and evening in sacrifice to God.

The designation given. He is called the Lamb of God; and that for several reasons,—because he was chosen, appointed, and accepted by God.

His gracious act. "Which taketh away the sin of the world." Here the doctrine of Christ's atonement is clearly taught; and if this be denied, we rob the fabric of Christianity of its foundation; strike at the very roots of the tree of life; attempt to pluck the diadem of glory from Immanuel's brow; mutilate the fair volume of revelation; take the brightest jewel from the cabinet of Scripture; dash the cup of consolation from the lips of the mourner; and leave the sinner without a gleam of hope. Oh! then, let us take our station by the cross, and behold the Lamb of God.

April 9.

BEHOLDING THE LAMB OF GOD.

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."—John i. 29.

Let us proceed to contemplate the Saviour in

His all-sufficient atonement. And here we have

Its cause. It is sin. The very idea of atonement supposes this. Sin is of such a nature, that no efforts of ours can remove it. Its stain is too deep to be washed away, could we even shed tears of blood.

Its efficacy. Sin is taken away. The sacrifice of Christ does not alter the nature of sin, but delivers the sinner from its power, ransoms him from its guilt, and saves him from its awful consequences. Here is an allusion to the scape-goat, on whom the priest laid his hands, and over whom he confessed the sins of the people; after which it fled into the wilderness, and bore with it the iniquities of the people. Lev. xvi. 20–22.

Its extent. "The sin of the world." It were derogatory to the Almighty to imagine that he would provide a remedy inadequate to the malady. The mercy of God is boundless; the

atonement of Christ is infinite; and the Gospel commission, so far from being limited to a particular spot, is as wide as the world.

His exalted claims. We are called upon to behold him. This includes

A high admiration of excellences. Who can enumerate them? In vain do we employ the power of language, the force of imagery, and the sublimest strains of thought, on a subject so vast, that, like the mighty ocean, defies our attempts to fathom it; or, like the bright luminary of day, dazzles our eyes when we attempt to gaze on its splendor.

An entire dependence on his merits. Some behold, and wonder, and perish; but the Christian beholds, believes, and is saved.

Complete devotedness to his glory. If our eyes behold his glory, our minds will be filled with admiration, our hearts will beat with his love, our lips be employed in his praise, and our bodies be presented a living sacrifice. Blessed Jesus, may I behold thee as the Lamb of God, bleeding on the cross, and the Lamb in the midst of the throne!

April 10.

THE CHARACTER AND EXALTATION OF CHRIST.

"Behold, my Servant shall deal prudently; he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high."—Isa. lii. 13.

Thus God the Father speaks of his Son; the sacred writers seem to vie with each other in laying laurels at the stem of Jesse. Jesus is here represented both in his humiliation and exaltation. Note

His character. "My servant." There is in Christ an inferiority to the Father, of office, but not of person. He is here spoken of in his mediatorial capacity, as a servant. As God, he gave the law; as man, he obeyed it. He was divinely appointed to, and fully qualified for, the mighty and stupendous work he came to perform.

His conduct. "He shall deal prudently." Prudence is wisdom applied to action; its value is great, its want is much

to be deplored. If prudence is required in the statesman, the general, and the mariner, how much more in the Christian! Two things, especially, show the prudence of the Saviour; his conflict with the enemy, and his intercourse with man. If his course was characterized by zeal, it was marked by prudence.

His GLORY. Three expressions are employed to denote it.

He shall be exalted. This implies abasement, and he humbled himself. Joseph, Moses, Gideon, David, and many others mentioned in Scripture, were exalted, but none so high as Christ. His name is above every other name.

He shall be extolled. By whom? By the Father, and all the holy angels; in the anthems of the temple above, and the praises of the church below.

He shall be very high. He is so, dwelling in the heaven of heavens, as a Prince and a mighty Champion; he is so in the estimation of every Christian. Is he so in your experience? The dearest object of your regard on earth must only occupy the footstool of your affections; but he must have the throne.

Extol his kingly power;
Adore the exalted Son,
Who died, but lives, to die no more,
High on his Father's throne.

April 11.

VISITING THE TOMB OF CHRIST.

"Come, and see the place where the Lord lay."—Matt. xxviii. 6.

THERE are five spots of interest to the Christian, which he should often visit in his solemn contemplations; the manger of Bethlehem, the garden of Gethsemane, the cross of Calvary, the tomb of Joseph, and the Mount of Olives. It is natural for us to visit the grave of some valued friend or dear connection, and drop the silent tear, while memory brings fresh to our recollection past scenes of pleasure and of joy; let us come and see the place, not where the Lord lies, but where he lay; for he is risen.

COME AND MOURN OVER YOUR SINS THAT LAID HIM THERE.

Never did sin appear so exceedingly sinful, as in the sufferings and death of Christ. Shall the veil of the temple be rent in twain, and your hearts remain unmoved? Shall the sun hide his glories, and the land be covered with darkness, and you not be filled with shame for your sins? Shall the earth quake, and the rocks rend asunder, while you feel no pangs of grief, no contrition of spirit? Come, and then shall angels carry the tidings to the celestial mansions: "He goeth to the grave to weep there."

COME AND WONDER AT HIS LOVE. Do you speak of philanthropy or disinterestedness? The world never can produce a nobler instance than that which he furnished in making himself of no reputation, that we might be raised to honor.

COME AND SEEK AN INTEREST IN HIS ATONEMENT. Nothing else can disperse the gathering tempest of Divine wrath, and brighten our firmament. This alone can meet the accusations of Satan, quiet the ragings of conscience, honor the demands of the law, and satisfy the requirements of justice.

COME AND REJOICE IN HIS GLORIOUS TRIUMPHS. How futile were all the efforts made by his enemies to keep him in the grave! Nothing could retain him there; he came forth on the morning of the third day, as the sinner's friend, sin's foe, death's conqueror, and the invader of the territories of the grave.

COME AND REMEMBER THAT HE IS RISEN AS THE PLEDGE OF OUR RESURRECTION. We fall to rise, we die to live again. Christ has risen as the first-fruits of those that slept; what a glorious harvest shall there be, when all the saints shall rise to honor, glory, and immortality!

COME AND WAIT FOR HIS SECOND ADVENT. He shall come; for reason confirms it, he himself has declared it, the Scriptures testify it, and angels revealed it. Wait with patience, earnest desire, confident hope, and continual preparation; then shall angels convey you at death to your Father's house, and exclaim, Come, see the throne where the Lord reigns.

My Father's house, my heavenly home,
Where "many mansions" stand,
Prepared, by hands divine, for all
Who seek the better land.

April 12.

THE SAVIOUR'S SEVERE CONFLICT.

"Who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross."—Heb. xii. 2.

The Christian is pursuing a course that is identified with all that is solemn and sublime—his track is marked in lines of blood, and leads to glory, honor, and renown; it excites the interest of heaven, earth, and hell; many are watching him:

"A cloud of witnesses around
Hold him in full survey."

He has the smiles of Jehovah, the ministration of angels, the prayers of the church. Jesus has gone before to lead the way, and prepare a place for him; and he is to be contemplated at every step. The truth taught us in this passage is, that the anticipation of joy supported the Saviour in the endurance of suffering. Let us view him in

His severe conflict. "Who endured the cross."

The dignity he possessed. When we refer to the Saviour in the scenes of his humiliation, we must never lose sight of his pre-existent glory and his unrivalled excellences. The splendor of his Godhead was for a time enshrined in the veil of his manhood; the world could see in him no more than a man, but the eye of faith beheld his glory.

The degradation he endured. "The cross." This was a death attended with the most excruciating pain, and connected with ignominy, shame, and reproach. But what was the pain of body felt on the cross, compared with the anguish of soul inflicted by the curse?

The design he had in view. He suffered to make an atonement for sin, to reconcile us unto God, and that he might finally bring us to everlasting glory. Let it be our humble and hearty desire, that these high and important ends may be accomplished in us, and that we may be ever looking unto Jesus.

April 13.

THE SUFFERINGS AND GRACE OF CHRIST.

"As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: so shall he sprinkle many nations."—Isa. lii. 14, 15.

We cannot be mistaken in the individual to whom the prophet here refers. He speaks not of himself, but of some other man, the Man Christ Jesus. Three things are here observed respecting him.

The wonder he excited. "As many were astonished at thee." Everything about the Saviour was wonderful. How mysterious was the union of the Divine and human nature in one Person! Many were astonished at his birth, the poverty of his condition, his doctrine, his miracles, his kindness and compassion, his sufferings and death, his resurrection and ascension.

The sufferings he endured. These are here alluded to in a most touching manner; his countenance indicated the pains of body and agonies of soul he felt. How well was he called "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief!" He who is fairer than the children of men in the dignity of his Person, the glory of his nature, and the excellences of his character, had "his visage marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men." These sufferings were voluntarily endured on his part, cruelly inflicted by his enemies, but efficacious in their results.

The grace he manifests. "So shall he sprinkle many nations." Everything is observable here.

The nature of the blessing. "He shall sprinkle." This may allude to the sprinkling of blood on the door-posts, in the Jewish passover. The blood of sprinkling is applied to the conscience. It is emblematical of the outpouring of the Spirit.

The manner in which it is imparted. "So shall he sprinkle;" that is, in this manner, by these sufferings. Thus "by his stripes we are healed."

The number that shall participate in it. "Many nations." The sacred influence of his grace shall be received by countless myriads of souls, Gentiles as well as Jews.

April 14.

THE SAVIOUR'S ANTICIPATED TRIUMPH.

"Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross."—Heb. xii. 2.

JEROME, when he had read the religious life and death of Hilaron, closed the book, and exclaimed, "Hilaron shall be the champion whom I will imitate." When we view the character of the Saviour, as drawn out in the Scriptures, let us say, "Jesus shall be the glorious person whose example we will follow." Let us contemplate him in

HIS ANTICIPATED TRIUMPH. What was the joy set before him, the prospect of which animated him in his sufferings?

The glory of the Divine attributes. This glory appears in the works of God, like so many scattered rays shooting forth in all directions in the universe; but its full splendor and overpowering brightness are condensed and drawn into one focus in the cross, where "mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other."

The downfall of Satan's empire. He swayed his tyrannical sceptre nearly over the whole world, for with the exception of Judea, the nations were wholly given up to idolatry; but when the Saviour came, he struck a death-blow to his kingdom; this animated him in his suffering course, that the empire of this proud tyrant should be finally overthrown.

The establishment of a glorious kingdom. He knew that "of the increase of his government there should be no end;" he saw, in joyful anticipation, Jews and Gentiles, men of every country and clime, uniting to spread the tidings of his love, and the triumphs of his cross; and this animated his suffering spirit.

His exaltation at his Father's right hand. He knew, though his sufferings were great, his reign should be glorious; though he endured the cross, many crowns should flourish on his brow. The subject presents us with the foundation of our hope, an example for our imitation, and a stimulus to our perseverance. It has been justly remarked, that as, in copying the productions of ancient genius, the admiring artist takes up his station before his model, and, that he may not omit a single line of shade, raises his eye every moment to scan the original; so we are to avail ourselves of the perpetual presence of Jesus, by recurring in thought to his Divine example, preparatory to every step we take.

April 15.

THE SACRIFICE OF A BROKEN SPIRIT.

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God! thou wilt not despise."—Psalm li. 17.

This is David's penitential psalm. He prays for himself, that he might be pardoned and purified, and for the church, that had been scandalized by his fall. In this passage we are led to contemplate

The sacrifices God requires. "A broken spirit, and a contrite heart." That is,

A heart humbled with a sight of sin. The true penitent is thus abased, when he considers the evil nature, awful defilement, and hateful deformity of sin. The mind must be enlightened before these feelings of contrition are experienced; and this is the work of the Spirit.

A heart wounded under a sense of sin. "A broken spirit" intimates far more than a partial or transient effect produced on the feelings—it is a divine, deep, and durable impression on the heart, and connected with a sincere and cordial return unto God.

A heart tender and docile. The heart of the true penitent yields to the threatenings, and melts under the promises, of God—discovers a simple, childlike, and teachable disposition. What a beautiful ornament is humility! It has been represented as the string that binds together all the precious pearls of the Christian graces, and if it break, they are all scattered.

The reception God will give to such sacrifices. It is here said, he will not despise them. But why?

Because of the sacrifice of his Son. All the legal and ceremonial offerings pointed to, and had their completion in him, in whom alone we can find acceptance before God. Our sacrifices must be offered on the altar of our hearts, and ascend mingled with the much incense of our great High Priest, in order to their reception.

Because of the declarations of his word. Here we have both the precept and the promise. God requires this sacrifice, and would he therefore despise it? The loftiest strains of praise and adoration proceeding from glorified spirits in heaven, are not more acceptable and pleasing to him than the breathings of an

humble, pious soul. The most precious promises are made to such. Isaiah lvii. 15. Let it be my earnest aim to present such an offering to God, encouraged by the assurance that with it he will be well pleased.

April 16.

OBEDIENCE THE TEST OF LOVE.

"If ye love me, keep my commandments."—John xiv. 15.

So said our Lord to his disciples, when he was about to be parted from them, and sorrow filled their hearts; and so he says to all who make a profession of his name. Observe here

A SUPPOSITION. "If ye love me." Love is one of the strongest passions of the human mind—and four things may be remarked concerning the believer's love to Christ.

Its necessity. We cannot serve God aright without it, engage with pleasure and profit in the ordinances of religion, or have any pretensions whatever to true piety. No services or sacrifices, however costly, can be acceptable to God, if there are not the flames of love ascending from the altar of the heart.

Its qualities. It must be sincere, the love of the heart: it must be strong, not to be quenched by the water of difficulty: it must be supreme, no rival must be suffered to engage your affections.

Its grounds. Our love to Christ is the reflection of his love to us. As the needle is drawn to the loadstone, so the heart of the believer is attracted by the powerful influence of Christ's excellences.

Its evidences. Love is a powerful principle, that operates many ways. It will lead us to desire the presence of the Saviour, to prize his ordinances, to value his word, and openly and unhesitatingly to confess his name before men.

A REQUISITION. "Keep my commandments." Christ is a good Master, and rewards all his servants with unspeakable honors. Note

The commands he has given. There are two great duties which he has enjoined more particularly on us—love to his people, and remembrance of himself: all the other precepts laid down in Scripture for our rule, may be here included.

The obedience he requires. Though it cannot be marked by perfection, it must be characterized by sincerity. In order to its acceptance with God, it must spring from right principles and motives. "My burden is light,"—a light burden, indeed, says one, that carries him that bears it. I have looked through all nature for a resemblance of this; and I seem to find a shadow of it in the wings of a bird, which are indeed borne by the creature, and yet support her flight towards heaven.

April 17.

WALKING IN CHRIST.

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him."—Col. ii. 6.

There can be no true religion without experience; and where the power of truth has been felt within, its practical influence will appear without. Note

A representation of the Christian character. It is the reception of Christ.

In what capacity is he received? Not only in a belief of his word, and a profession of his name, but an actual union to his person, and participation in his benefits. As "Christ," the anointed Prophet to remove our ignorance; "Jesus," the atoning Priest to expiate our guilt; "the Lord," the Almighty King, to subdue our corruptions.

In what manner is he to be received? Personally, for he cannot be received by proxy; freely, as God's unspeakable gift; fully, as the complete Saviour, with a renunciation of every other hope; willingly, and not by constraint, except that of love. In conversion, the will is sweetly subdued, and made to fall in with the arrangements of mercy.

A rule for Christian conduct. It is to walk in Christ—and this course is to be

Consistent in its character. "So walk ye," that is, let there be a correspondence between principle and practice; what you profess to be, and what you really are.

Progressive in its tendency. The Christian life is a holy, honorable, difficult, pleasant, and safe walk; we are not to stand still, but to urge on our way to the place of our high destination.

Spiritual in its nature: "walk ye in him;" that is, in a nearness to, and communion with him—there must be faith in his merits, dependence on his strength, and conformity to his example. Such a course will be associated with the cultivation of spiritual and holy dispositions and tempers, and crowned with the Divine favor and regard. May such a course be mine; that it may be said of me when I am no more on earth, "He walked with God—and God took him."

"Christ is our life, our joy, our hope,
Nor can we sink with such a prop."

April 18.

THE PURSUIT, PEACE, AND SECURITY OF BELIEVERS.

"Great peace have they which love thy law; and nothing shall offend them."—Psalm cxix. 165.

It is impossible for us duly to estimate the numerous advantages associated with the service of God. Religion does for its possessor what nothing else can do. The passage before us gives a delightful view of its beneficial effects. Three things are here remarked of believers.

The disposition they cherish. They love God's law. Let us inquire how they evince this love.

By searching its hidden glories. We must search the Scriptures, as we would dig in a mine in quest of the precious metal; or as we would seek some valuable article that we had lost.

By meditating on its important truths. If the Word of God is the food of the soul, spiritual meditation is that by which we digest it, and derive nourishment from it, as it is mixed with faith.

By practising his Divine precepts. It is not the bare knowledge of truth that can save the soul, but the inward experience of it, which will uniformly be attended with a practical regard to its holy dictates.

The tranquillity they enjoy. "Great peace have they."

They have great peace in possession. Conscience is pacified,

and the mind is composed, because they are reconciled to God. The streams of peace may flow gently within, while the storms of sorrow are raging without.

They have greater peace in prospect. Here, though their sky has many a gleam of brightness, yet the gathering clouds sometimes almost overcast it in the shadows of darkness; but there the firmament shall be all light, and not a cloud or mist be seen; for there shall be no night there.

The safety they obtain. "Nothing shall offend them," or be a snare or stumbling-block to them. Nothing that God does, or that man can do, shall really injure them; but all things shall work together for their good. Such are the advantages connected with true piety: it may be our happiness to realize them!

April 19.

CHRIST OUR PROPITIATION.

"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood."—Rom. iii. 25.

In our salvation Christ is all and in all. He is "the way," in which God comes to the soul, and the soul to God—"the truth" to direct us in it; and "the life," to impart and sustain in us a spiritual principle. He is represented in three interesting views in this passage.

The nature of his work. "A propitiation." The Greek word signifies both an atoning sacrifice and a mercy-seat.

An atoning sacrifice. He lived to furnish us with a perfect example of holiness; and died to make a full expiation for sin. As these two ends are united in Scripture, so they must be combined in the Christian's experience.

A mercy-seat. The word here translated "propitiation" is in Hebrews ix. 5, rendered "the mercy-seat." See Exodus xxv. 21, 22. As at the mercy-seat of the ark, Jehovah met with his ancient people, and communed with them; so in Christ, of whom the ark was a lively type, he draws near to those who draw near to him; receives their petitions, listens to their complaints, and displays his mercy.

The method by which he is revealed. "Whom God hath

set forth;" or foreordained, see 1 Peter i. 20. He was set forth by God from eternity, in the ancient predictions of the prophets; in Jewish rites and ceremonies, for the voice of every sacrifice, though but faintly uttered, and heard by few, was, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world;"—in his own personal ministry; afterwards in the preaching of the apostles; and now in the public ministry of the Gospel, and in the private testimony of believers.

THE MANNER IN WHICH HE IS TO BE RECEIVED. "Through faith in his blood;" or in his atonement. Christ is the grand remedy, faith applies to it; Christ invites, faith comes; Christ promises, faith relies. Thus the blood of the Saviour is sprinkled on the conscience, and secures our access to God, and acceptance with him.

"Thy blood, dear Jesus, thine alone,
Hath sovereign virtue to atone;
Here will we rest our only plea,
When we approach, great God, to thee."

April 20.

THE CHRISTIAN'S TRIALS.

"My brethren, count it all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations."—James i. 2.

SUCH a sentiment is calculated to startle the unbeliever, who forms his estimate of things by carnal reason, rather than by revelation and Divine teaching. He who would judge aright in spiritual things, must not remain in the outer court of the temple of Christianity, but enter into the holiest of all, within the veil, and thus see by the lamp of the sanctuary. Here we have

A CASE SUPPOSED. The Christian in temptations.

Their nature. They are trials. Thus when it is said God tempted Abraham, the meaning is, that he tried him. He tries us, says Henry, "to draw out our graces, not our corruptions." Thus he proves his people, as he did the Israelites. Deut. viii. 16. Our faith, love, zeal, sincerity, and all the Christian graces, are tried.

Their variety. They are "divers." The Christian's course is not like the calm and unruffled appearance of the lake, on a

beautiful summer's evening; but like the tempestuous ocean, where one wave rolls on another in fearful and constant succession. God has a variety of ways to try his people. In the appointment of these methods, we must not question his wisdom, and desire to choose for ourselves.

Their unavoidableness. The believer is said to fall into them. It is not a matter of joy, but of shame, when he rushes into them. We lose the comfort of our sufferings, says Manton, when there is guilt in them. "Let none of you suffer as an evil-doer." We should therefore seek to be prepared for every trial that awaits us; so that, instead of being thrown off our guard, we may stand still, and see the salvation of God. One has beautifully remarked, that affliction, though like the rugged season of winter, it is searching, trying, and withering; yet when sanctified, it is purifying, and prepares the soil of the heart for spiritual fruitfulness and beauty.

"Whene'er temptations lure my heart,
Or draw my feet aside,
My God, thy powerful aid impart,
My Guardian and my Guide."

April 21.

THE CHRISTIAN'S CALCULATION.

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience."—James i. 2, 3.

While there is here a case supposed, namely, the existence of trials; there is

A course recommended. "Count it all joy." We are prone to take a very different view of our trials to this. Are they not too often the ground of our sorrow and murmuring, instead of the occasions of our joy and thankfulness? Did philosophy ever teach such a lesson as the one before us? Here is a calculation to be made; but none can do it without a Divine Tutor. This heavenly arithmetic baffles all the powers of human reason, and mocks at the wisdom of the world. How are we to estimate here?

By Scripture, and not by reason. The Bible should be the book used in the school of adversity; and the more we consult

it, the better. Affliction is called by Luther the Christian man's divinity.

By faith, and not by sense. Without the exercise of this grace, we shall take but a very narrow view of things. On this principle Moses acted, when he "chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." In the exercise of faith, Paul reckoned that the sufferings of this present time are not to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in believers.

THE CONSIDERATION URGED. "Knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience."

The design of affliction. "The trying of faith." Affliction is the furnace in which God tries his people; sin is the dross that is purged away; and when they come forth, it is as gold that has been purified and refined. Faith is the grace principally tried, because it is the root of all other graces; and is most called into exercise. Thus Jesus said to Peter, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."

The result of the trial. "It worketh patience." It not only gives scope for its exercise; but

> "Lays the rough paths of peevish nature even,
> And opens in each breast a little heaven."

April 22.

THE OFFERING OF PRAISE.

"Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me."—Psalm l. 23.

WE require to be reminded of the plainest truths in religion, because we are so prone to forget them. No duty is more obvious than praise, and perhaps none more neglected. Note

THE SINS CONDEMNED. These are implied, though not expressed.

Atheism. "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God;" but how many say so in their lives! The man that lives without God in the world is a practical atheist; however he may startle at the charge, it is correct. How many are daily living on the bounty of that benevolent being they scorn to acknowledge!

Ingratitude. Multitudes murmur against God, instead of praising him; and are discontented with the allotments of Providence.

Despair. How awful is the state of that individual who listens to the blasphemous suggestions of Satan, rather than the declarations of God's word! O give him the praise, and believe.

The conduct required. You are called upon to offer a sacrifice; it is of a spiritual nature; namely, praise to God. It must burn in the heart, kindling your affections into a heavenly flame; it must be offered from the lips, and shed its fragrance in the life; it must be intrusted to the care of him who is our Great High Priest.

The motives supplied. Let us name three.

It is reasonable you should. Can you imagine anything more proper than the offering of praise to God?

It is delightful you may. In this act, think not that you are conferring a favor on him; the obligation is on your part. Praise is the sweetest employment in which you can engage; it is the work of heaven commenced on earth.

It will be dreadful if you do not. The glorifying of God is the great end of life; and if this end is not answered, it had been better for you if you had never been born. Present the offering, while the temple door is open, and the High Priest is waiting with his golden censer, and the mercy-seat may be approached, and heaven is propitious; ere the glory of the Lord departs, and the candlestick of the Gospel is removed, and the voice utters, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still."

April 23.

DELIVERANCE FROM WRATH.

"Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."—1 Thess. i 10.

How refreshing and reviving is the name of Jesus! It is "as ointment poured forth;" and can never be unseasonable for the contemplation of the believer. It is the name of our dearest Friend, our compassionate High Priest, and our Mighty Deliverer. Let us meditate on what is said of him here. Note

Our danger. We are exposed to wrath.

It is deserved. In a state of innocence, man's moral atmosphere was clear and bright; but when sin entered, the sky began to lower, and was soon overcast with dark clouds, and all foretold the gathering storm. By our iniquities we have incurred the displeasure of the Most High.

It is dreadful. If the wrath of a king is as the roaring of a lion, what must be the anger of an incensed Deity! It is partially felt by the ungodly here, in the pangs of a guilty conscience.

It is future. "The wrath to come." Here it drops on the sinner, and causes a hell in him; but hereafter it will be poured out on him in one perpetual tempest, where no ray of hope ever glimmers on the impervious gloom of darkness and despair.

Our deliverance. It is honorable in its character, shedding a lustre on the Divine perfections; costly in its price, being procured by the blood of Jesus; great in its extent, as it delivers from great evils, and conducts to lasting happiness; complete in its nature, as it requires no meritorious addition of ours; free in its bestowment, as the gift of God's grace; and eternal in its duration, as it is to be enjoyed through interminable ages. Be it our constant aim and ardent wish to secure an interest in this Mighty Deliverer; then, how delightful, amidst the trials and vexations of earth, to anticipate the joys and triumphs of heaven!

April 24.

HUMAN FRAILTY.

"As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more."—Psalm ciii. 15, 16.

These words give us a very affecting view of human life, and one that we may profitably contemplate. Note

Human frailty. Many figures and images are employed in Scripture to describe the uncertain tenure and the short duration of man's life. It is a mere bubble on the wave; a "leaf driven to and fro," which, however fresh and green for a season, soon fades and withers away; a lighted torch, either burnt out in the decay of nature, blown out by unforeseen accident, or wasted away by the rapid progress of disease—an hand-breadth,

a shadow declining on the plain, and a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanishes away. One has strikingly described life as a little spot of time between two eternities. It is compared to

Grass. This image is used both in the Old and New Testaments. But wherein is the resemblance? In its origin. It is from the earth. We are of the earth, earthy, and this should teach us humility. In its frailty, how tender is the grass!—many things combine to destroy it, both heat and cold; the mower's scythe, and the blasting wind. Will not this apply to life? "Teach me," says David, "how frail I am." In its short duration. Matthew vi. 30.

The flower of the field. This image is stronger than the former, though both are very significant. How gay and lovely is the flower of the field!—we gaze on it, and admire its beauty; but soon, and sometimes suddenly, it withers and sinks into its parent earth, and is no more seen. Just such is the case with frail man: "He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down." May such considerations induce us to seek a better life in the world to come, that while as it regards our natural being, we are as the flowers of the field, in a spiritual sense we may be trees in the garden of the church here, and plants in the paradise above, whose beauty and fragrance shall praise the Almighty; and being free from noxious vapors, blasting winds, chilling frosts, and burning heat, we shall bloom with the freshness of immortality, beside the river of life.

April 25.

CASTING OUR CARE UPON GOD.

"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."—1 Pet. v. 7.

How highly privileged is the Christian! If his sins are many and great, he receives pardon; if his sorrows are heavy, his supports are divine; if his wants are numerous, his resources are infinite; if his cares are trying, his relief is insured; and there is one above that careth for him. Note here,

A TRUTH IMPLIED. This is threefold.

Each one has his own peculiar care. It is said, "your care."

We are best acquainted with that which forms our own thorn in the flesh, for "the heart knoweth its own bitterness." Our Saviour enjoins us to take up our cross, plainly implying that there is a particular one appointed for each of his disciples.

This care is various. "All your care." How diversified are the subjects of our care and solicitude! They refer to our state before God—our condition in the world—our plans and projects in business—our families, connections, and relatives, and the cause of Christ.

It is too great for us to bear alone. Therefore it is to be cast on God. Human nature is weak, and our graces are imperfect; amidst the numerous cares that press on us, we should sink, but underneath are the everlasting arms.

A DUTY ENJOINED. "Casting all your care upon him." How is this to be done? By acknowledging your weakness—relying on his power—hoping in his mercy, and pleading his promises. "Praying and believing," says Leighton, "are the hands by which the soul can turn over to God what it cannot bear."

THE ENCOURAGEMENT GIVEN. "He careth for you." Four things prove this.

The gracious work he has performed in you. Could he furnish you with a greater evidence of his love than by implanting his grace in your hearts?

The past kindness he has shown you. In your wanderings he has brought you back—in your trials he has supported you; when clouds of guilt and fear overcast your sky, he dispersed them, and shone upon you with his radiant beams.

The present comforts he confers upon you. He gives you the olive branch of peace, which calms you in the almost overwhelming deluge of human life; he plants the tree of hope in the very bosom of despondency; and causes the flower of joy to bloom among the thorns and briars of the wilderness.

The future prospects he has set before you. He not only insures you his presence in your journey through the vale of life, but a safe passage over the swellings of Jordan, and a happy entrance into the land of Canaan. With such encouragements, how can you yield to fear?

> He'll take thee, at thy parting breath,
> To his divine abode.

April 26.

COMING TO CHRIST.

"Come unto me."—Matt. xi. 28.

Such is the kind invitation of the Saviour to the perishing sinner. Let us make three inquiries in reference to this act.

To whom are we to come? To Jesus. Shall we go to angels? they cannot save us. To the law? it will condemn us. To the world? it will deceive us.

By what power are we to come? Not by our own. John vi. 44. Who ever heard of the frozen heart melting into tenderness of itself? or the dead soul quickening itself to spiritual life? or the heart of stone changed by human power into a heart of flesh? The arm of omnipotence must be exerted, or nothing can be done to purpose.

How are we to come? "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them." Jer. xxxi. 9. We must come

Repenting of our sins. When the sinner returns, what is the first object he sees? The cross, reminding him of sin. What is the first influence he realizes? The Spirit convincing him of sin. What is the first desire he expresses? "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Praying for mercy. Prayer is the effect of repentance, and repentance is the origin of prayer. There is an intimate connection between believing, repenting, and praying; faith sees, repentance mourns, prayer speaks: faith may be compared to the eye, repentance to the heart, and prayer to the mouth; thus faith beholds the Saviour, repentance mourns for him, and prayer applies to him. How distinguished are the joys and privileges to be realized by those who have come to Christ! Those who draw near to him with weeping and prayer on earth, shall approach him with songs of triumph in heaven.

There shall I wear a starry crown,
And triumph in almighty grace,
While all the armies of the skies
Join in my glorious Leader's praise.

April 27.

DIVINE IMMUTABILITY.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them."—Psalm ciii. 17, 18.

The two preceding verses led us to the contemplation of the frailty of human life, but this passage invites us to the consideration of a more pleasing subject, connected with the unchangeable nature of the Divine Being. Note

Divine immutability. The mercy of the Lord may be viewed

In its antiquity. "From everlasting." The first link of our salvation is concealed in the mysterious clouds of eternity past, and the last link of it is hidden in the unseen glories of eternity to come; but the chain of connection is beautifully discovered in the effectual calling, gracious change, and happy experience of the believer. While, therefore, we refresh ourselves beside the living streams of divine mercy, let us endeavor to trace this mighty river to its source, and that we shall find in the bosom of the eternal God.

In its freeness. "It is mercy," an act of free favor and grace. This is the very characteristic of the Gospel. If we are saved, it cannot be by the price of human merit, but the pure work of sovereign mercy.

In its duration. "To everlasting." The fabric reared by human merit must be demolished and crumbled into ruins, while mercy is built up forever. It shall be perpetuated to the last moment of time, and run parallel with the longest line of eternity.

In its subjects. They are described in three ways. By their fear of God. This fear is a gracious and filial principle; a disposition of mind both commanded and commended in the Scripture. By their faithfulness to his covenant, that is, the covenant of grace which God has made with them, and revealed to them in its promises, privileges, and perpetuity. They keep it in their thoughts by meditating on it, in their hearts by loving it, and in their desires by longing to know more of it. By their fulfilment of his commands. Thus we see that real religion will always have its practical influence on its possessor. God's righteousness is here said to be upon their children's children, "that

is," says Henry, "if they tread in the steps of their predecessor's piety." I have been beside the banks, admiring the streams of this river of divine mercy; but have I plunged into it? I have gazed on the fair and beautiful flowers of divine promises; but have I plucked them with the hand of faith? I have listened to the experience of those who have tasted divine love; but can I say, "I obtained mercy?"

April 28.

THE RENEWAL OF STRENGTH.

"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."—Isa. xi. 31.

In traversing the field of Scripture, we cannot but observe how beautifully the promises are blended with the precepts, entwined like ivy around the oak. We have an instance before us. Note

The nature of the duty required. Waiting on God.

What does it imply? A spiritual knowledge of him. This is indispensable; because we cannot, with any suitable or solemn feelings, wait on God, if we are not savingly acquainted with him. It supposes free access to him, and this is gained by virtue of the glorious person and finished work of our Mediator.

What does it include? How are we to wait upon him? In the performance of Christian duties, in the closet, at the family altar, the sanctuary, and in all appointed means. In the exercise of Christian graces. This regards more peculiarly the manner of our waiting on him. Let it be on the principle of faith, with humble dependence, ardent love, holy desires, and watchful patience, and it shall not be in vain.

The extent of the promise given. Observe

The supposition. The decline of strength is evidently implied, or there would be no occasion for its renewal. And where is the Christian who has not felt this? How soon does our strength fail in duty, difficulties, or danger?

The statement. They shall renew their strength, or they shall change it, as the word may be rendered. Thus they are said to go from strength to strength. God insures to his people enough in hand for present use; but the stock is laid up in him, not in them: this keeps them humble, watchful, and

prayerful. The source from whence fresh supplies are to be obtained is always open; so that we may be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

April 29.

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH.

"Ye should earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints."—Jude 3.

In the early ages of Christianity, when there were such numerous efforts made for the overthrow of the Gospel, it became necessary for those who espoused the sacred cause, to show themselves to be bold champions for the truth, and go forth, sword in hand, against the enemy. The same opposition to the truth still exists, though displayed in a different way; and the same spirit of fortitude is still demanded in the follower of Christ.

Let us explain the term. "The faith;" it here denotes the system of the Gospel. See Rom. iii. 31; Gal. iii. 23. It must be embraced in faith: there is nothing in it against the principles of reason, but much above its grasp. The misery of man proves the necessity of the Gospel; the work of Christ exhibits the substance of the Gospel; the influences of the Spirit secure the application of the Gospel; and the glories of heaven are the results of the Gospel.

Let us examine the fact. "This faith was once delivered unto the saints." This intimates

Its authority. It was delivered by a Divine hand; frequently in the promises, symbolically in the types, prophetically in the predictions, actually in the person of Christ, and supernaturally by the inspiration of the Spirit.

Its sufficiency. It was "once" delivered to the saints, that is, once for all. We are to expect no other revelation from God; the period of the Gospel dispensation is called "the last days." Christ was "once" offered, and "once" entered into the holy place.

Let us enforce the duty. "Ye should earnestly contend. Contemplate

Its nature. You must be ready to confess it, careful to evidence it, zealous to promote it, and willing to suffer for it.

Its spirit. It must be earnestly, with Christian zeal, charitably, with Christian love; and seasonably, with Christian prudence.

"Faith is the Christian's prop,
Whereon his sorrows lean."

April 30.

JESUS A PRINCE.

"The Prince of Peace."—Isa. ix. 6.

THERE are mysteries in the things of God, which we cannot comprehend in our present state of weakness and imperfection; we must therefore wait till we see them in the light of eternity. The incarnation of the Son of God is one of these. Well might the prophet designate him as the "Wonderful."

"The cross, the manger, and the throne,
Are big with wonders yet unknown."

Let us contemplate the Redeemer in

HIS CHARACTER AS A PRINCE. We may notice

The dignity of his person. This will appear if we consider who he is; that he is possessed of essential Godhead; and that the various attributes ascribed to Jehovah belong equally to him. We see in him God in our nature, and God on our side.

The nature of his qualifications. There are many things necessary in order to make a good prince. If wisdom is required, our Saviour has it; for "in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." His power is unlimited. He has a power essential to him as God, and delegated to him as Mediator. Justice is requisite in the administration of the affairs of a kingdom. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne." His might and majesty are tempered with mildness and mercy; love is the sceptre with which he rules.

The extent of his dominion. The sway of earthly kings is limited, but the kingdom of this prince ruleth over all. Solomon's territories were large, but those of his great Antitype have no bounds. All in heaven, earth, and hell, are subject to him. The angels of God worship him, and redeemed spirits in glory fall down before him.

The greatness of his honors. He is clothed with light and majesty, seated on a glorious throne, surrounded by myriads who are shouting his praise; the sceptre of authority is in his hand, a crown of unrivalled splendor is on his head, and a royal law goes forth out of his mouth. Have I bowed the knee before the Prince of Peace, and am I willing to be his obedient subject?

May 1.

JESUS THE PRINCE OF PEACE.

"The Prince of Peace."—Isa. ix. 6.

Reconciliation to God is the great blessing proclaimed in the Gospel; this is effected by him whom we shall now consider in

His title as the Prince of Peace. Let us advert to four things respecting him which accord with this name.

The disposition he manifests. It is that of peace. His severity was mingled with tenderness; as has been well observed, like the thunder-storm, which, having discharged its bolt at the earth, weeps itself, exhausts itself in a healing shower, which closes the rent it had made; so the pity of Jesus commiserates and pours itself forth over those whom, in the same breath, he had felt himself called on to rebuke. He who is "the lion of the tribe of Judah" to his enemies, is "the Lamb of God" to his friends. View him from the commencement to the termination of his course of humility, trial, provocation, and sufferings here, and does not every look, word, and act, justify the propriety of the title which distinguishes him as the Prince of Peace? The image of Christ's person is a lamb; the emblem of his Spirit, a dove; and the character of his kingdom, peace and righteousness.

The work he performed. He came to make peace. Sin has caused war between heaven and earth, and set the creature and the Creator at variance. Peace could not be proclaimed on earth till sin, the cause of war, was expiated.

The kingdom he established. It is founded in peace. The most striking images are employed to show the peaceful nature

of the empire of grace. The Gospel is a system, which, when it is sincerely believed, and effectually applied to the soul, reconciles men to God and to one another.

The subjects he governs. They are the sons of peace, called into a state of peace, governed by peaceful laws, required to cultivate peaceful tempers, realizing peaceful enjoyments, and bound for a peaceful kingdom.

"Behold the Prince of Peace
The chosen of the Lord."

May 2.

THE UNDEFILED IN THE WAY.

"Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord."—Psalm cxix. 1.

This verse is full of interesting matter for our reflection, and will lead us to contemplate the Christian in three ways; what he is, what he does, and what he enjoys; or, his character, conduct, and comfort.

What he is. "Undefiled in the way." This is not to be taken in its literal acceptation, but with certain limitations. Who can say, "My heart is clean?" Believers are undefiled in two senses.

A spotless righteousness is imputed to them. There is no other way in which they can stand accepted in the sight of a holy God. There is a transfer of the obedience and satisfaction of Christ to the sinner's account.

A holy principle is implanted in them. Thus, "if any man be in Christ," there is a change of state by virtue of the Redeemer's imputed righteousness; "he is a new creature," there is a change of nature and disposition, by the renewing of the Spirit. This sanctifying principle developes itself in a holy and consistent practice.

What he does. "He walks in the law of the Lord."

His way. It is a peculiar, pleasant, safe, and honorable course. He is guided, not by human traditions, but by the Divine testimony; not by the glimmering taper of reason, but by the glorious Sun of Revelation. All who are saved by God's grace must be governed by his laws.

His walk. He is not merely said to be, or to stand, but to walk in God's law; this implies life, activity, and progression.

What he enjoys. A blessing is pronounced on him. He is blessed with the spirit of God to put him in the way, the wisdom of God to direct him in the way, the power of God to keep him in the way, and the grace of God to comfort him in the way.

"He waits in secret on his God;
His God in secret sees;
Let earth be all in arms abroad,
He dwells in heavenly peace."

May 3.

KNOWING THE JOYFUL SOUND.

"Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord! in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted."—Psalm lxxxix. 15, 16.

By "the joyful sound," we are, doubtless, to understand the Gospel. Three things may be here noticed respecting it.

The tidings it proclaims. It is the sound of

Reconciliation to the enemy. There is war between heaven and earth, God and man; man is the rebel; a treaty of peace is devised, arranged, and concluded, and it is made known in the Gospel, the language of which is, "Be ye reconciled to God."

Freedom to the slave. What joy must have prevailed among the Jews, when the year of Jubilee returned, and the captives were set at liberty! You read an interesting account of it in Lev. xxv. 8—17. O how glorious is the jubilee of the Gospel!

Welcome to the prodigal. Sinners, you have wandered from the paternal roof; your heavenly Father might in justice forever discard you, but in mercy he calls you home: how many times has he sent after you, and you have refused to go!

The attention it demands. You must "know the joyful sound." What is implied in this?

It is clearly to distinguish it. There is a great difference between hearing and knowing it. There must be a spiritual perception of it, enabling us to judge and discern between truth and error.

It is cordially to approve of it. The word knowledge is often used to denote approbation. Christ will say at the last day to the ungodly, "I know you not;" that is, I do not approve of you. Believers "approve the things that are excellent."

It is spiritually to receive it. The Gospel must be embraced with the warmest affections of the heart.

THE BLESSINGS IT INSURES. Tranquillity in his favor, joy in his name, dignity in his righteousness. May the Gospel not only reach my ear, but penetrate my heart!

"O happy souls, that know the sound,
Celestial light their steps surround."

May 4.

THE TIMES OF IGNORANCE.

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at."—Acts xvii. 30.

THE chapter from which this passage is selected, contains Paul's impressive and faithful sermon to the philosophers at Athens. We are led to contemplate

THE CONDITION OF THE GENTILE WORLD, PREVIOUS TO THE GOSPEL DISPENSATION. Two things are mentioned.

Ignorance on the part of man. The knowledge of God is the foundation of religion, but the Gentile nations were destitute of this. Look at the state of Athens, as here described. Paul did not visit that great city to amuse himself with the many objects of interest it presented to his view; the architectural grandeur of the temples, the magnificence of the buildings, the beautiful paintings and images, the finest productions of art and science; he had a nobler end in view. To witness men possessing such stores of learning, surpassing all around them in intellectual attainments, falling down to worship idols erected by themselves, was to him a heart-rending scene, and "his spirit was stirred within him." The idols were so numerous at Athens, that it was said to be easier to find a god than a man there. He wished to give them the light of the Gospel, which would eclipse the glimmering taper which burnt in the schools of philosophy.

Wherever a Divine revelation has not come, there are times of ignorance.

Forbearance on the part of God. He winked at these times: let us not mistake here; it does not intimate that he connived at sin. The Greek word signifies to look over; and the celebrated Howe paraphrases it, "The beams of his eye did in a manner shoot over it." While the Jews, as his favorite and peculiar people, had the Divine oracles, God suffered "all nations to walk in their own ways." When we look at the past and present state of the heathen world, sunk in ignorance, superstition, and idolatry, we find ourselves in a labyrinth, from which the powers of reason cannot extricate us, a depth which mortal lines cannot fathom, and a problem not to be solved by human calculation. Let faith stand and adore the sovereignty of the great Eternal, and patience wait for the light of immortality, to reveal to us more fully and clearly the ways of God to man.

May 5.

THE UNIVERSAL COMMAND TO REPENTANCE.

"But now commandeth all men everywhere to repent."—Acts xvii. 30.

Having taken a glance at the condition of the world previous to the coming of Christ, let us now look at

The state of things after the introduction of the Gospel. The heralds of salvation are to go forth into all parts of the habitable globe, and exhort all mankind to repentance. Note

Its nature. There are two sorts of repentance, legal and evangelical; the one arises from a fear of hell, the other from a love of holiness; the one refers to some particular crimes, the other to all sin; the one is by fits and starts, the other is gradual and increasing; the one is like the pouring down of water from a cloud in a storm, the other is like the gentle but perpetual flowing of a fountain. Genuine repentance includes the conviction of the conscience, the contrition of the heart, the confession of the mouth, and the conversion of the life.

Its necessity. We must repent to testify our obedience to

God, to show our hatred to sin; for the reception of pardon, and for deliverance from hell. Those who do not sorrow for sin here, must weep because of it hereafter; if you have not repentance unto life, you must have sorrow unto death.

Its extent: "all men everywhere." Sin has infected every part of the world, therefore all need salvation; it has been committed by every man, therefore all are commanded to repent. Matthew Henry calls this "the practical part of Paul's sermon before the university."

Its time: "now," in the Christian era; now, at the present period; now, while God is waiting to be gracious, and Jesus welcomes you, and the Spirit bids you come, and the Gospel warns you of delay, and ministers entreat you, and the church is ready to rejoice over you, and evil spirits are watching you, and angels long to strike their harps anew on your return to your heavenly Father. The cloud that hangs over us, which the frequent vapors of our sins have made, except it dissolve, and fall down again in sweet showers of godly tears, is reserved to be the matter of a dreadful storm.

May 6.

MANNA TYPICAL OF CHRIST.

"And the house of Israel called the name thereof manna: and it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey."—Exod. xvi. 31.

We cannot read the Scriptures with attention without perceiving the striking analogy there is between the types of the law, and the truths of the Gospel. There is something very remarkable in the manna being sent down from heaven on the Israelites, and notwithstanding their rebellion against God, continuing with them till they arrived in the promised land. In what respects was it typical of Christ?

In its color. It was white; this was emblematical of the purity of Christ's nature, his spotless perfection, and the holiness of his heart and life. His life was a very transcript of the law of God, and every pure and holy action flowed unsullied from his heart, as water from a crystal fountain.

In its quality. "The taste of it was like wafers made with

honey." It required no other ingredients to make it palatable: is it not so with the spiritual manna? Christ and his blessings require nothing beside to recommend them to our spiritual taste. How sweet his name! "it is as ointment poured forth;" his presence how cheering! it sheds a holy fragrance through the church above and below; how sweet his promises, as they centre in him! how sweet his word and ordinances, when by them we can with joy draw water out of the wells of salvation!

In its abundance. Upwards of a million fed upon it in the wilderness; there was no scarcity, but an ample supply for all. How beautifully this illustrates the fulness of Christ! Who ever made application to him, and was sent away empty? In him there is a fulness of grace, wisdom, knowledge, pardon, and glory.

In its descent. It fell from heaven round about the camp when the dew descended. Christ is the living bread sent down from heaven; he descends like dew upon the new-mown grass. It was sent in a seasonable period, when they were ready to famish, and Jesus came in "due time," to be a ransom for lost sinners.

May 7.

THE CEASING OF THE MANNA.

"And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited; they did eat manna, until they came to the borders of the land of Canaan."—Exod. xvii. 35.

It is highly interesting and instructive to trace the resemblance that exists between the types and figures of the ceremonial dispensation, and Jesus the great antitype; the Old and New Testament must therefore be read in connection, as tending to throw a light on each other. Let us once more consider the manna as typical of Christ.

In its freeness. It was sent that all the Israelites might avail themselves of it, and have their hunger satisfied; it was free for all, and given without reserve. Will not this apply to the spiritual manna? Who will limit the operations of God's grace? Christ must be exhibited to all in the Gospel, because all need him, all must perish without him, all are welcome to him.

In its gathering. Every man was to gather according to his eating. So Christ must be embraced; there must be a going forth after him, and a reception of his spiritual benefits. Its being daily gathered, denotes our continual coming to Christ; its being collected in the morning, the importance of an early dedication to him; and its being found without the camp, our retirement from the busy scenes of the world, and even domestic intercourse, to commune with the Redeemer.

In the time of its continuance. It was given to them during the time of their journey in the wilderness, forty years. This was emblematical of the continual provision God makes for the spiritual wants of his people. Year after year, the heavenly bread descends; you may gather it in his word, in his house, and in his ordinances; and while you have a spiritual appetite, you need not fear a spiritual famine.

In the period of its ceasing. It did not cease falling till the wandering tribes had reached the promised rest. When they tasted the food of Canaan, then the supply of manna was stopped; and when the Christian pilgrim comes to the termination of his journey, and obtains the end of his faith, then the means of grace may be dispensed with. The scaffold is taken down when the building is finished; and the sails are lowered when the ship has come safe to shore; so there shall be a sensation of divine ordinances, when the ultimate designs of God are accomplished in your perfect bliss, and you eat of the hidden manna above. God commanded Moses to preserve it in a golden pot, and deposit it in the ark of the testimony as a memorial of his goodness in future generations; so those who have experienced the sweetness of Christ should tell it to others, even to the generations following. As the manna was despised, so now is the heavenly food.

Is this the kind return?
  Are these the thanks we owe?—
Thus to abuse eternal love,
  Whence all our blessings flow?

Let past ingratitude
  Provoke our weeping eyes;
And hourly, as new mercies fall,
  Let hourly thanks arise.

May 8.

CONTINUAL DEPENDENCE ON GOD.

"Then said the Lord unto Moses, Behold I will rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day."—Exod. xvi. 4.

The things that occurred in the history of the Israelites were designed for our instruction and improvement. From this miraculous provision made by the Almighty for them, let us make three observations.

In trying circumstances we should trust in God. As soon as the Israelites had crossed the Red Sea, and escaped Pharaoh and his hosts, who were drowned, and while the last notes of the triumphant song of Moses, celebrated on that occasion, had scarcely died away on their ears, they murmured; how much better would it have been if they had prayed? But have we not been thus guilty? Though we have been the recipients of numerous bounties, have we not said in a murmuring tone, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" How well may he address us, "O ye of little faith!"

Where we cannot lay up in store, we must be content with daily supplies. The camps of the Israelites were cleared of the manna in the evening, not a crumb was to be left, and they were to lie down at night, reposing on the providential care of God; thus they were taught a lesson of continual dependence. Have we learnt this, and do we feel it when we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread?"

The gifts of Providence do not supersede human exertions. The manna fell from heaven, but not into their tents or into their mouths—there was room for their diligence and industry in gathering it. Naaman was commanded to go and wash in Jordan before he could be healed. Peter's draught of fishes must be dragged to shore. Saul of Tarsus must go to Ananias to be taught. If in miracles room was left for exertion, how much more under ordinary circumstances in life?

"Fear not" the want of outward good;
For his he will provide,
Grant them supplies of daily food,
And give them heaven beside.

May 9.

CHRIST AND HIS PEOPLE A WONDER TO MANY.

"I am as a wonder unto many."—Psalm xxxi. 7.

These words may be understood in three ways; literally, typically, and spiritually. Let us consider them,

In a literal sense, as they will apply to David. He was a wonder to many in his trials. These were numerous and of various kinds. Some of his severest sufferings arose from from those who ought to have been his greatest comforts. What must have been his feelings when Absalom his son rose up in rebellion against him! He was no less a wonder to many in his deliverances. God interposed in a most remarkable manner on his behalf. What a narrow escape was it when Saul cast a javelin at him—when Absalom's conspiracy was frustrated, and Ahithopel's counsel came to nought! When he was again restored to his kingdom in peace, he was a wonder to many. Look at the words

In a typical reference, as they will apply to Christ. "All things must be fulfilled, said our Saviour, "which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me." I would rather be accused of finding Christ where he is not, than of not finding him where he is. In the exposition of Scripture, I would rather go out of my road to meet him, than that he should cross my path, and I not see him. Jesus is a wonder to many in the extent of his love—in the depth of his humiliation—in the severity of his sufferings—and in the riches of his grace. View the words

In their spiritual meaning, as they will apply to the Christian. Joshua and they that were with him were men wondered at; so is the believer. He is a wonder to the world. The men of the world cannot understand the principles on which he acts, nor the motives by which he is influenced. They think it strange that he runs not to the same excess of wickedness as they do—that he finds pleasure in those exercises which would be a drudgery to them—that Jesus whom they look upon as a root out of a dry ground, is to him the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley. He is a wonder to himself, when he thinks of the change he has experienced—the scenes through which he has passed—the battles he has fought—the prospects he has in

view. May not the unbeliever adopt the language? He is a wonder to many—angels wonder at him, that he should make light of those things which they desire to look into—Christians wonder at him—devils and lost souls wonder at him: what would they give for the golden beams of the day of grace?

May 10.

THE CHRISTIAN'S PERSECUTIONS.

"And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake."—Luke xxi. 17.

In the context our Lord foretells the destruction of Jerusalem, and endeavors to prepare the minds of his disciples for the perilous times that were approaching. The passage presents us with

A PROPHECY. This refers to the treatment they were to expect from the world—hatred.

The subjects. "Ye," that is, his disciples—those who refuse to serve Satan, and boldly acknowledge Christ as their Master; those who dare to be singular, and swim against the tide of evil; those who are dissatisfied with the world for their portion, and desire a better country.

The hatred. It is a dislike to their principles rather than their persons—and this is now shown in a thousand ways of private, petty persecution by individuals, who, if their power were equal to their inclination, would light afresh the fires of martyrdom, and fill the prisons and dungeons of our land with the faithful followers of Christ.

The agents. "All men," that is, those that are still at enmity with God; and is this matter of surprise? We do not wonder at the ferocity of the wolf to the lamb, or of the hawk to the dove? Why should we marvel then, if the world hate us?

The cause. "For my name's sake." Christians bear the name, and espouse the cause, of the Redemer; and it is for this they are hated and opposed. They may be esteemed and beloved as friends and associates; but they are despised as the friends and companions of Christ. The smiles of his countenance will make amends for the world's frowns and the disapprobation of ungodly men. Let us therefore go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

May 11.

INORDINATE ANXIETY FORBIDDEN.

"Be careful for nothing."—Phil. iv. 6.

What system but Christianity can teach such lessons, instil such principles, and hold out such encouragements? Did the attendants at the schools of philosophy ever acquire the knowledge, or realize the happiness, which Paul did at the feet of Jesus? He was enabled to hold with a loose hand the objects of this life, and to seize with a firm grasp the realities of a future state. We have here

An evil forbidden. It is inordinate anxiety. The expressions employed in this passage must be taken in their spirit, rather than their literal acceptation. While religion is far from teaching us to cherish a careless indifference to our worldly concerns, it forbids an over-anxious carefulness. Many considerations should induce us to avoid such a state of mind. By it

We distrust God. He has told us to cast all our care upon him, and is this not enough to satisfy us? If we indulge in feelings of inordinate anxiety, we reflect on his wisdom, as if he did not know what was best for us—on his love, as if he would suffer us to sink—on the word of his promise, as if he would not fulfil it.

We dishonor religion. Its excellency and superiority are discovered in the preservation of the mind from distracting cares and anxieties; and we honor it and glorify God, when we maintain our Christian calmness and fortitude in difficult and trying scenes, spreading our case before the Lord; but if we give way to despondency, and are determined to carry our own burden, the enemy will exclaim in triumph, "Where is now their God?"

We disquiet ourselves. There is no feeling so hurtful to the body, or injurious to the mind, as a fretful, ill-foreboding disposition. Those who cherish it have to contend with a thousand imaginary evils; and are constantly in fear, where there is no danger. They will gaze with intense anxiety on every little cloud that gathers around them, while the sunshine of mercies and favors from above is almost unheeded. Let us, above all things, be careful for the interests of the soul.

May 12.

HABITUAL PRAYER RECOMMENDED.

"But in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."—Phil iv. 6, 7.

We have here a wide field for our contemplation, and can but just glance at the numerous objects presented to our view. Note

A DUTY ENJOINED. Prayer is the best resource in every exigency. Consider

Its simple nature. It is the making known of our requests unto God. How numerous, needful, rich, and valuable are the blessings for which we ask! God is perfectly acquainted with those things that we require, but he must know them from us.

Its various parts. Three terms are here employed, "prayer, supplication and thanksgiving:" thus we are taught not only to deprecate the evils we would avoid, and desire the mercies we need, but to be grateful for the favors we have received.

Its extensive use. "In every thing." A devotional spirit should pervade all our ways, and be connected with our duties, trials, enjoyments, and anticipations. Our motto should be, "Praying always."

A PROMISE ADDED. And this promise is calculated to cheer the mind in the most trying scenes.

Its character. "The peace of God." That is, a composure and tranquillity of mind originating in our reconciliation to God; it is called "the peace of God," because his wisdom devised it, his Son procured it, his word reveals it, and his Spirit conveys it.

Its excellence. "It passeth all understanding." It cannot be fully estimated, though it is really enjoyed by the believer. Eternity will unfold its richness, and more clearly manifest its excellence.

Its effect. "It shall keep your hearts and minds." Here are two distinct faculties, the affections and the judgment; it centres the desire of the heart in God, and keeps the mind in a right apprehension of divine things.

Its medium. "Through Christ Jesus;" that is, by his mediation; for he is our peace, and without him, God is a consuming fire, ready to devour us in his wrath.

May 13.

DAVID'S CONFIDENCE.

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."—Pslam xxiii. 1.

The psalm before us is full of comfort to believers. Three things are especiaily mentioned: the provision God has made for them in life, verses 1—3, 5; their protection in death, verse 4; and their prospects for eternity, verse 6.

The characters represented. Believers are compared to sheep. Note

Their former condition. Once they wandered from God like lost sheep, but he has brought them back to the fold. By sin, the holiness, happiness, and dignity of man are lost.

Their present state. They are redeemed by the blood of Christ, sanctified by his Spirit; and are expected to resemble sheep, to be meek and gentle, patient and resigned.

Their small number. They are represented as a little flock, and they are few, compared with the world that lieth in wickedness; but there are other sheep which must be brought into the fold of Christ.

The claim asserted. "The Lord is my shepherd." The believer is allowed to make this claim, and encourages himself in Christ as his shepherd. Contemplate the goodness which under this character he displays, the knowledge he possesses, the tenderness he exercises, and the offices he performs.

The confidence expressed. "I shall not want." This may refer to

Temporal supplies. "Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure." God has not promised us luxurious delicacies, but the necessaries of life, and his special blessing with our common mercies.

Spiritual provisions. We cannot want while such a Divine source is opened for our supply. In Christ we have "all spiritual blessings;" and these are secured by the efficacy of his blood, the influence of his Spirit, and the prevalence of his intercession. Let my prayer be, "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth! where thou feedest; where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon."

May 14.

SALVATION PLACED IN ZION.

"I will place salvation in Zion, for Israel my glory."—Isa. xlvi. 13.

In reading the Scriptures, we cannot but remark how threatenings and promises, denunciations of wrath and intimations of mercy, go together; so that while one part of the heavens is darkened with clouds of coming judgment, on the opposite side is to be seen the bow of mercy. Such a scene we have in the passage before us—it is a rainbow of promise in the cloud of threatening. Notice

A distinguished person. "Israel my glory." Look at each of the terms by which believers are known. "Israel," that is, a prince with God; Jacob was so named because of his prevalence in prayer. We cannot seek better honor for ourselves than to be Israelites indeed. "My glory." This is a wonderful expression, and signifies two things: God glories in his people—the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him; and he will joy over them with singing. He is glorified in them. All his perfections are glorified in the salvation of his people. He is glorified in their devotedness of heart and consecration of life; and in their love, zeal, prayers, and praises, and in the fruits they bring forth: in the furnace of affliction, in the season of death, and in the happiness of heaven, God is glorified by his people.

A delightful promise. Look at it in

Its substance. "Salvation." It includes all blessings suited to the nature, powers, wants, and immortality of the soul; and is the wonder of angels, the triumph of heaven, the scorn of the world, the heritage of the church, the joy of the believer, the end of the law, and the substance of the Gospel.

Its scene. "I will place salvation in Zion;" that is, in the church. How is this done? Meritoriously by the atonement of the cross. It was placed in the holy land at the death of Christ, and there it was to be first preached, "beginning at Jerusalem." Instrumentally in the appointment of ordinances. Where the Gospel is preached, there salvation is placed; be thankful that it is placed in your hearing—the word is nigh thee. Effectually by the gift of the Spirit: thus it is brought home to the conscience. May it be placed in my heart by experience!

May 15.

THE SINNER'S BONDAGE AND REDEMPTION.

"Ye have sold yourselves for nought, and ye shall be redeemed without money." Isa. lii. 3.

The chapter out of which these words are selected has a primary reference to the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity; but may be viewed in connection with the methods of grace under the constitution of the Gospel. Note

The degrading bondage effected. Man is here represented as a willing slave; and several things tend to show the aggravated nature of his crime.

The article. "Yourselves;" that is, the whole man, both body and soul; the immortal as well as the perishable part of your nature. But are you at your own disposal? Has not he who made, sustains, feeds, and clothes you, the greatest claim on you?

The act. "Ye have sold yourselves." Imagine the barbarous conduct of Nero, who persecuted the Christians at Rome, demolished their temples, plundered their property, burnt many of them, and sold others as slaves to their enemies; and all to feed his avarice, and gratify his sinful passions. Do you not deprecate the infamous deeds of such a tyrant? Ah! you have acted over the scene with regard to yourselves; you have done it willingly, and from choice.

The unprofitableness. "For nought." If an individual sold a large estate for a mere trifle, his foolish act would be highly censured: this but faintly sets forth the folly of sinners in becoming the willing captives of their enemies. Sin is unprofitable, whatever view you take of it.

The glorious redemption promised. Every thing respecting it is worthy our attention.

Its fulness. The remedy is commensurate with the disease. The sinner is not only pardoned, but released; his fetters are broken, his bonds loosed, and he is led out of prison. He is not simply delivered from wrath, but restored to the Divine favor, enriched as well as liberated.

Its fitness. The salvation of Christ is admirably adapted to the state of man as a sinful, fallen creature, because it imparts that which alone can improve his condition, raise him from his degradation, sanctify his heart, and save his soul.

Its freeness. "Without money." Redemption is a free and unmerited act. An opulent man would not be imprisoned for debt; if the captive could purchase his freedom, he would no longer remain in the dungeon. Our state is one of helplessness, we have nothing to pay; but Jesus says, "I have found a ransom."

Its perpetuity. While in its contrivance it issues from eternity past, in its duration it extends to eternity to come. It ransoms from everlasting death, and brings to everlasting life.

May 16.

THE CONVERSION OF LYDIA.

"And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, and she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul."—Acts xvi. 14.

The conversion of Lydia may be further viewed in

Its nature. "Whose heart the Lord opened." Observe

What sin has done. It has shut the heart against God. He knocks at the door of our hearts in various ways, by the voice of conscience, the sound of the Gospel, and the dispensations of Providence; and yet we regard him not, and are unwilling to open to him till arrested by his grace, and effectually called by his Spirit.

What grace does. It opens the heart. This gives us a delightful and interesting view of conversion. Its seat is the heart —and its extent is intimated by the opening of the heart. The ear may be opened to listen to the Gospel, and the mouth to speak of it, while the heart is not opened to embrace it. In conversion, the understanding is opened to receive the truth, the affections are opened to love it, the will is opened to obey it, the memory is opened to retain it, and the lips are opened to confess it.

Its author. "The Lord." The work is ascribed to him whose power enables, and whose pity constrains him to do it. Ministers may open their Divine commission, but they cannot open the hearts of their hearers to receive it. We could as easily create a world as convert a soul.

Its effects. "She attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." What a beautiful gradation there is throughout the little history of this saint! She came, she heard, she believed, she worshipped; her heart was opened, and her attention was secured. The word here translated "attended unto," is very forcible in the original, and signifies to apply and take heed to. The way to hear the word to profit, is to listen to it with self-application and prayer.

May 17.

THE CHARACTER OF LYDIA.

"And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul."—Acts xvi. 14.

What a bold champion for the truth was the Apostle Paul! he was constantly employed either in exploring fresh ground on which to erect the standard of the cross; or visiting and watering the churches that were already planted. We find, on his separation from Barnabas, he takes Silas; they meet with Timothy at Derbe; Luke joins them at Troas; and they all set out for Philippi. They were not permitted to teach in the city, so they assembled the people without its walls. Here is a remarkable instance of success in the conversion of Lydia to God. Many things deserve our notice respecting it.

Its subject. She is described by

Her name. "Lydia." What an honor to have her name recorded here! Though all saints have not this honor, yet they have their names written in the Lamb's book of life; and this stamps a more lasting dignity upon them than if they were emblazoned on the pages of history, or inscribed in the annals of fame.

Her employments. "A seller of purple." She was not one of those women of whom Paul speaks, "that learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house." Religion teaches us to be active and industrious in our lawful avocations in life, and to abide with God in our calling. Her occupation was humble, but honest.

Her birthplace. "Thyatira" was a city of some eminence in

Asia Minor, and was situated at a very great distance from Philippi, where she now resided, and carried on her trade. We are not told why she left the place of her birth; but we are sure she did not regret it, as she could trace the leadings of a kind Providence in bringing her to sit under the ministry of Paul.

Her religious profession. "Which worshipped God." She was a moral but not a changed character, piously inclined, but not a possessor of piety; she worshipped God according to the light she had, and was thereby ready for further discoveries of Christ and salvation.

Its means. "She heard us." "Faith cometh by hearing." It is a privilege to have the sound of salvation in the ear; but a far greater one to experience the power of salvation in the heart. Lydia heard with attention, and no doubt with prayer; we are quite sure she heard with pleasure, because she heard with profit.

May 18.

THE BELIEVER'S HERITAGE.

"Thy testimonies, have I taken as an heritage forever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart."—Psalm cxix. 111.

The Bible contains the testimony which God has given to the children of men. His name is inscribed on the fair volume of nature, but not in such bright and clear characters as in the book of revelation. We are peculiarly privileged in having the two-fold testimony of the law and the Gospel. Let us imitate David in the use he made of God's word. Observe

The excellence of the Bible. It is the Christian's heritage.

How extensive. All earthly possessions compared with this, are but as a drop to the ocean, or an atom to the globe. Look at the perfections of God's nature, the purposes of his grace, the plans of his mercy, the promises of his word, and the provisions of his covenant, and see the extent of the believer's heritage.

How secure. Upon all the glory there is a defence. How

remarkably have the Scriptures been preserved in the midst of innumerable efforts to exterminate them from the earth; no less secure is the believer's interest in the glorious blessings they reveal. These are the sure mercies of David.

How durable. "An heritage forever." On earth we do but catch a glimpse of the glories of this inheritance, obtain our title, and are preparing for the period when death shall open the gates, and we shall enter on the full possession of it.

The experience of the believer.

His act. "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever." This act is personal, voluntary, deliberate, and wise, and regards perpetuity. If we would extract sweetness from the Scriptures, we must not merely read them, but take them and bind them around our heart. It is not the bee's touching of the flowers that gathers honey, but her abiding on them, and drawing out the sweet.

His joy. "For they are the rejoicing of my heart." All that have cordially received and experimentally felt them, will find this to be the case.

May 19.

BEHOLDING THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

"I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."—Psalm xxvii. 13.

Calvin calls the Psalms the anatomy of the soul—they lay open the thoughts, feelings, inward workings and desires of the believer's heart; and describe very accurately our joys and sorrows, hopes and fears. They may be compared to a mirror in which we may behold our own resemblance. In this passage observe

The scenes of distress alluded to. They were such as were ready to make him faint. We have heard of the afflictions of David, and how he was tried in his government, his family and household, as well as in his own experience. How many things combine to try and perplex the believer! His is not a path strewed with roses; he is not permitted to enjoy the sunshine of prosperity, and dwell at ease; he sails not along a calm and smooth stream, but is tossed with foaming billows and raging waves ere he enters the port of peace. Our greatest

trials often arise from our dearest comforts—and the rose that we press to our bosom is encircled with sharp and prickling thorns, which inflict many a wound, and cause many a pang. How often under the accumulated weight of trials are we ready to faint!

THE EXPRESSION OF CONFIDENCE STATED. Note here

The nature of the principle possessed. It was faith. This grace is necessary in every step of our journey—in all the movements of our mind towards God—and in every devotional exercise. Faith extracts the sweetness of comfort out of the bitterness of affliction, and discerns the gilded rays of the sun behind the dark clouds of trial. It inspires us with courage when we are ready to faint; and sets our feet upon a rock, so that we can stand secure amidst the tumult of the waters with which we are surrounded.

The object to which it directs us. "The goodness of the Lord. What an extensive subject for our contemplation! Think of his goodness in providence—how often has he interposed on our behalf, and turned the curse into a blessing! But the goodness of his grace as far exceeds his providential favors, as the glorious splendor of the sun outshines the pale beams of the lamp of night.

The place of its manifestation. "In the land of the living." This may refer to the present life—to the sacred temple below, and the glorious sanctuary on high. Thus in the darkest season we must trust in God, and not be "wearied and faint in our minds." Soon the mysteries of providence shall be solved, and the curtain which now conceals so much from us shall be drawn up; while millions of voices exclaim, "He hath done all things well."

May 20.

THE CHRISTIAN'S PATIENCE.

"In your patience possess ye your souls."—Luke xxi. 19.

THE exercise of patience implies the existence of trials; and the Christian course is beset with them; but when he has obtained the end of his faith, and there is nothing more to try his patience, he will acknowledge that there was not one thorn or

brier too much in the wilderness, not a billow or wave too much in the ocean of life. Note here

A DUTY. This respects the conduct we are to pursue as to ourselves—it is patience.

It admits a painful truth. That believers in their afflictions are apt to lose or forget themselves by impatience, resentment of injuries, wrath, and anger. How prone are we to display the fretful temper of Jonah, and say, "I do well to be angry;" instead of heaping coals of fire on the heads of those that offend us, to soften and melt them down!

It proposes a desirable course. Self-possession. When we are easily irritated, and our anger is kindled with every breath of provocation, we not only expose our weakness, but often show our wickedness in hasty words, unkind speeches, and unchristian deeds. Let our weapons of defence be, not wrath, hatred and retaliation; but patience, pity, and prayer.

It shows how the object is to be obtained. By the exercise of patience; this is better than resistance. Anger may glance into the breast of a good man, but rests only in the bosom of fools. Fulgentius, after he was extremely persecuted, had an advantage to seek revenge, but would not; "For," said he, "we must suffer more for Christ than this." If we let the sun go down upon our wrath, we must expect clouds to shade the light of God's countenance. By resentment we take the law into our own hands; by patience we leave our cause in the hands of him who hath said, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."

May 21.

THE CHRISTIAN'S SAFETY.

"But there shall not an hair of your head perish."—Luke xxi. 18.

IT is consolatory to reflect, that, though believers are the objects of the world's hatred, they are the subjects of God's especial care. In this passage we have

A PROMISE. This regards the safety insured to us from God. The phrase here made use of is frequently employed in Scripture to denote perfect security and freedom from harm. Turn to the following passages, 1 Sam. xiv. 45; 1 Kings i. 52; Acts xxvii.

34. This is not to be taken in its literal meaning, but in its spiritual acceptation, intimating that they should not be really injured, as to their eternal interest; for, says the Saviour, "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." The Christian's present trials are only preparing the way for his ultimate triumphs. They are, as so many artificers, to make the crown of glory more massy and more bright. Every stroke doth but add fresh beauty to it. The mysteries of Providence are often the ground-work of some excellent piece he is about to discover to us. Two things tend to alleviate our anxiety with regard to the trials that befall us.

They are known to God. He takes cognizance of the most minute circumstances in our history. "The hairs of your head are all numbered." He observes the silent tear that trickles down the cheek; he hears the sigh that escapes from the agitated breast; he is acquainted with the fears and misgivings that sometimes ruffle the tranquillity of our spirits, and reads the language of prayer on the tablet of the heart.

They are permitted by God. This is a doctrine that has been much abused and misrepresented. God permits sin, but it is man that perpetrates it. The wicked are called "his sword." Jesus said to Pilate, "Thou couldst have no power at all against me except it were given thee from above." The rage and fury of the ungodly, as well as the elements of nature, are under his control, who makes the wrath of men to praise him.

May 22.

DIVINE SUPPORT UNDER TRIALS.

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee."—Psalm lv. 22.

The promises of God are of two classes: there are some that are absolute; as, "The Lord will give grace and glory. As thy day, so shall thy strength be." Others are conditional; as, "Acknowledge him in all thy ways, and he shall direct thy paths." The promise before us is of this description. Here we see that the believer has a burden to try him, a duty to engage him, and a promise to encourage him.

A burden to try him. And of what does it consist? Of

sins, for though the power of corruption is subdued, its being still remains; the root of enmity is not plucked up, but its shootings are checked; the tyrant is not destroyed, but he is dethroned, and his sceptre is broken; the lion retains his ferocity, but he is in chains. There is a burden of cares, and these arise from innumerable sources, external and internal; of doubts, respecting our spiritual state before God.

A DUTY TO ENGAGE HIM. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord." What else can we do? We should soon sink under the load. We are to cast our burden of sins on him, by a reliance on the merits of Christ; our burden of cares, by trusting in his providence; and our burden of doubts, by pleading his promise.

Why should we complain of our burden? "We fear," says Bishop Hall, "our best friends: for my part, I have learned more of God and myself in one week's extremity, than the prosperity of a whole life had taught before."

A PROMISE TO ENCOURAGE HIM. "He shall sustain thee." He sustains us under the load of sin, by giving more grace; under the weight of cares, by imparting true comforts; and under the burden of doubts, by increasing our faith. Dwell more, then, on the brightness of God's promises than the darkness of his providences; and while the weight of the burden would excite your fear, let the omnipotence of Jehovah's arm inspire your confidence.

May 23.

THE NATURE OF THE NEW BIRTH.

"Which were born of God."—John i. 13.

MANY boast of their honorable descent, birth, and parentage, and the dignity and wealth of their ancestors; but who among the great and mighty of the earth can be compared with the believer who is descended from the Father of lights, and is an heir of immortal glory? Note

THE NATURE OF THE NEW BIRTH. An amazing change is produced, which extends to all the powers and faculties of the soul; there is the impression of the Divine image, the implantation of a Divine principle, and a restoration to the Divine favor.

They are born to a state of pilgrimage. Previous to conversion they were pilgrims in condition, in common with all mankind, who are on a journey from time to eternity; but now they have the heart of a stranger, and the feelings and dispositions of heavenly travellers.

They are born to sorrows. And these are of a peculiar nature, and arise from various sources; such as sin dwelling in them and abounding in the world, the withdrawment of the Divine presence and favor. If they are sowers, they sow in tears; if they are companions, they are "companions in tribulation."

They are born to joys. They now rejoice in those things in which they felt no interest before; the person, work, cross, word, and ordinances of Christ; and not only in the anticipations of hope, but in tribulations also, knowing that though it may afflict the mind, it cannot affect the state. Rom. viii. 35.

They are born to high honors—to be prophets, priests, and kings; as prophets, they know God's will; for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him;" they are a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices; as kings they have a kingdom within them, they are attended with royal guards, the angels of the Lord. They are born to an inheritance free in its reception, unbounded in its joys, and eternal in its duration. Remember, before you can realize these honors you must be born again;—

"Born in the image of his Son,
A new peculiar race."

May 24.

THE AUTHOR OF THE NEW BIRTH.

"Which were born of God."—John i. 13.

How mysterious and inexplicable to carnal reason are many of the doctrines of Christianity! Such is that of the new birth; and the language of the natural man concerning it is, "How can these things be?" The Scriptures make known to us the fact, though they do not explain to us the precise mode of the Spirit's operations in regeneration. John iii. 8. Observe

THE AUTHOR OF THE NEW BIRTH. The melancholy descrip-

tion given us of the wickedness and depravity of man in his natural state, plainly demonstrates to us that he cannot effect this change himself; it is by the will of God, as the moving cause; and the word of life as the instrumental means; therefore it is said, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth. Everything in the new birth is his workmanship. He gives the new heart, opens the eyes in the communication of light, and the ears to receive instruction; he gives a new name and a new nature; he puts his fear in our hearts; "We love him because he first loved us;" faith is his gift; Christ is exalted to give repentance and the remission of sins; he imparts joy, and the joy of the Lord is their strength; he taught them the language they speak, and first enabled them to cry, though in broken accents, "Abba, Father;" he works in them to will and to do, and without him they can do nothing. Every one but an atheistical skeptic will grant, that in the animal world the principle of life and motion is from God; and in the rational creation, our souls, with their powers and faculties, are derived from the same Divine Being. Now, if everything that lives received its life from God, the fountain of life, how unreasonable would it be to suppose that the Christian could receive his spiritual existence from any other source! The same power and wisdom that were necessary in forming man in the Divine likeness are requisite in re-impressing the image of God on his soul. How can we call in question the Divine agency employed in this work, when stones are raised up as children to Abraham, lions are changed into lambs, and the dead are raised to life? The finger of God is here; this is the Lord's doing, and it "is marvellous in our eyes."

May 25.

THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE CHRISTIAN.

"For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified."—Heb. x. 14.

The cross of Christ is an object of the greatest wonder, glory, and magnificence in the world; as we gaze on it, new discoveries and increasing beauties burst on our astonished view. It is the grand centre of attraction; and, ere long, all nations shall be drawn to it. It is the sun that illumines

the firmament of truth. It is the tree of life in the midst of the garden of revelation. It is a living fountain, from whence issue the streams of light and joy, peace and pardon, and all spiritual blessings. Here is

A GLORIOUS EFFECT. The sanctification of the Christian.

Its nature. To be sanctified, is to be set apart and made holy. Believers are set apart by a holy God, for the accomplishment of holy purposes, and the enjoyment of holy privileges. They have a holy nature, holy principles, holy desires and pursuits.

Its degree. Paul does not mean to say, that this perfection of sanctification is attained on earth; he is drawing a line of distinction between the two economies, the law and the Gospel; and proving that while one could not make perfect, the other could. Read the few verses at the commencement of the chapter. Perfect sanctification, or a complete renewal of the soul, is effected by the one offering of Christ, and secured to all believers; but they are not put in full possession of it, till they arrive in that world where a single spot of impurity can never appear. Sanctification begins with the dawn of grace, and is consummated in the meridian blaze of glory.

Its means. The blood of Christ is the procuring cause; but the work is carried on by various means instituted for the purpose. The word and ordinances are designed for this end, and so are afflictions; "By these shall the iniquities of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin."

Its agency. The Holy Spirit works effectually in the heart, and applies to our consciences the blood of the Lamb. He works as a Sovereign, where, when, and how he pleases. The whole presents us with a stimulus for the Christian's future course, onward to perfection; seek to increase in holiness, and grow in grace: also a foundation for the sinner's hope, it is the offering of Christ; he was "once offered," and there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.

But thy atoning sacrifice
  Hath answered all demands;
And peace and pardon from the skies
  Are blessings from thy hands.

May 26.

THE NATURE OF THE SOUL.

"Life and immortality."—2 Tim. i. 10.

INFIDEL writers tell us that death is the extinction of our being, and the grave the place of an everlasting sleep; but we believe that death is the threshold of eternity, and that we shall sleep only till the resurrection morn, and rise either to eternal happiness or never-ending woe. This is only the embryo state of our existence: "The dust shall return to the earth as it was," there is the death of the body; "but the spirit shall return unto God who gave it," there is the immortality of the soul. Let us bring forward some proof of the soul's immortality.

ITS NATURE. It is a spirit. How do we know this? Because it is capable of apprehending spiritual objects. It has been well observed, that a spiritual object can only be apprehended by a spiritual operation; a spiritual operation can only belong to a spiritual faculty, and a spiritual faculty can only be connected with a spiritual being. The Christian can commune with God. "God is a spirit;" he can hold fellowship with angels, "are they not all ministering spirits?" The language of Paul, in Hebrews xii. 22–24, is to the point. He uses the present tense, "Ye are come" to the association of the blest in heaven. But in what sense may believers be said to come? Not with the body, that would be impossible; it is by communion "they are come." And what part of man holds communion with these exalted intelligences? It is his soul; if so, it must be spiritual; and if it is spiritual, where is the individual who will deny that it is immortal? Some say, that what we call a spirit is a mere attribute of life; but we ask, how is it, when life is sinking, and the body is decaying, the spirit does not partake of that debility, decay, and disease, of which the corporeal frame is the subject? How often have the operations of the mind been carried on with the greatest intensity, when the body has been hastening to dissolution, and thus the spirit has triumphed over the flesh!

May 27.

THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST.

"For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified."—Heb. x. 14.

The law was only the shadow of good things to come; all its services and ceremonies formed but the threshold of that magnificent building of the Gospel temple, which is consecrated with richer blood, and more costly sacrifices, and associated with nobler designs. Paul argues the superiority of the Gospel to the law in a most masterly manner; and, among other considerations, he adduces the variety of sacrifices that were offered by the priests under the law, whereas Jesus our great High Priest has rendered a perfect atonement by one offering.

A GRACIOUS CAUSE. The sacrifice of Christ.

It was absolutely necessary. Sin rendered it so: it hid from us the Divine countenance, and shrouded our prospects in the darkest gloom and despair; and nothing could reconcile God to us but the death of his Son.

It was clearly prefigured. An importance is attached to the Jewish rites and ceremonies, only as they typified the grand atonement of Calvary. The church of God was then in its infancy, and these things were as so many pictures and hieroglyphics, which served but for that period; when our Saviour came, it had arrived at more mature years, and required no more those types, because it had a clearer manifestation of the Divine glory and grace: ere long it shall attain unto the stature of a perfect man, all childish things shall be put away, and the Deity shall no more be seen through clouds of incense and pillars of smoke, or the dark glass of ordinances, but face to face, without a veil between.

It was willingly made. He saw in dread array all the sufferings and agonies he was about to endure; yet he moved onward with firm step and steady purpose, exclaiming, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" When in agonies in the garden, he said, "Not my will, but thine be done." When apprehended, he did not resist. When he suffered, he threatened not; and when reviled, he reviled not again. He laid down his life for the world.

It was infinitely sufficient. The Godhead of the Saviour

made it so. Now was the sword of justice put again into its scabbard, only to be uplifted against those who despise the great salvation; mercy and truth now smile on the brow of the great Eternal, and the way to glory is consecrated; the gates of paradise are opened, and the voice of the Father is heard, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

May 28.

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

"A living soul."—Gen. ii. 7.

EVERYTHING connected with the soul is mysterious and wonderful, and calculated to fill our minds with astonishment; but its eternal duration stamps it with the greatest value and importance.

Another argument in proof of its immortality is,

THE PRICE PAID FOR ITS REDEMPTION. "The redemption of the soul is precious." If the soul is not immortal, then we are in no danger of future punishment; and if this be the case, how is Christ said to redeem us from the wrath to come? If the soul is not immortal, there is no future happiness; and if this be the case, in what sense can Jesus be said to purchase for us an eternal inheritance? Is the soul redeemed by the blood of Christ, and not immortal? Sanctified by the blessed Spirit, and not immortal? Then Christ died in vain, and they also who are fallen asleep in him are perished—then what becomes of the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure? How are we to understand the intercessory prayer of Jesus?—"Father, I will, that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." If we are with Christ where he is, we must be clothed with immortality.

> "'Tis immortality our nature solves;
> 'Tis immortality deciphers man,
> And opens all the mysteries of his make:
> Without it, half his instincts are a riddle;
> Without it, all his virtues are a dream."

THE HAPPINESS OF WHICH IT IS CAPABLE. It has powers and faculties that capacitate it for the enjoyment of the Deity.

There is no part of Christian comfort or happiness that does not depend on the soul's immortality. Are we comforted by the atonement of Christ? That atonement is infinite, and refers to the eternal duration of heaven. Are we consoled by the love of Christ? It is everlasting. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Hope points to immortality, and enters within the veil. If the soul is capable of so much enjoyment, and can be fitted to hold converse with angels, yea, with God himself, how absurd is it to suppose it would have been created merely to be the companion of the body for a few years, and then to be annihilated.

The testimony of Scripture. Numerous passages attest the fact. David said, "Into thy hands I commit my spirit:" see Job xix. 25–27. Moses and Elias appeared on mount Tabor, at the transfiguration of Christ; how could this have been, if the soul is not immortal? Hear the language of the apostle, Rom. viii. 10, 11, "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin," that is its doom by Adam's fall; but the spirit is life, or, as it might be rendered, your spirit lives, "because of righteousness." Again, see Matt. x. 28, Luke xx. 37, 38. Angels are said to rejoice at the conversion of a sinner; but why should they, if the soul dies with the body? Let me remember there is an immortality of bliss, and an immortality of woe; be it my highest aim to secure the one, and to escape the other.

May 29.

THE CHRISTIAN'S PROSPECT AND DUTY.

"Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."—2 Pet. iii. 14.

It has been well observed, that human life would be one stagnant lake, unless promise heaved up its waters, and bid them roll towards some ideal shore, which it represents as sparkling with beauty and delight. How glorious are the hopes which the Gospel inspires! Contemplate

The Christian's future prospects. See

The glories it unfolds. "Such things," that is, the dissolution of nature, the day of the Lord, new heavens and a new

earth. These things shall be preceded by the universal spread of the Gospel, the downfall of Antichrist, and the subversion of every system opposed to Christianity.

The ground on which it rests; ver. 13. "According to his promise." In cherishing such anticipations, we are not deluded by fancy—we rest the telescope of faith on the word of promise, and command an extensive prospect of things that shall shortly be brought near to us.

The feelings with which it should be viewed. Many motives should induce us to look for such things; as we desire to be freed from sin, released from trouble, have our graces perfected, and be in possession of eternal happiness. There must be the look of faith, hope, joy, desire, patience, and love.

The Christian's present duty. It may be summed up in one word, diligence. Note

The objects to which it should be directed. The possession of peace is one; we cannot be found of God in peace, till we are found in Christ as our Saviour. The perfection of holiness is the other; this cannot be attained here. The good ground of the heart is in cultivation, but it is not free from weeds; the gold of grace is mixed with the dross of sin: but when grace is perfected in glory, believers shall be blameless.

The manner in which it is to be performed. This diligence is to be applied to the observance of appointed means and ordinances, and to the cultivation of spiritual gifts and graces. Let me thus be constantly dwelling on the sides of eternity.

May 30.

A PRAYER FOR THE DIVINE FAVOR.

"Remember me, O Lord! with the favor that thou bearest unto thy people; Oh! visit me with thy salvation."—Psalm cvi. 4.

While multitudes of the human race disregard the claims of religion, there are those who have another and a nobler spirit, that bids them seek superior bliss, and bend their course towards heaven's unfading joys. Such individuals can unite in the comprehensive prayer of the psalmist, which we are now to consider. Three things are here implied.

An interest in the remembrance of God. "Remember

me, O Lord!" This is a suitable petition at all times; in life with its solicitudes, and in death with its solemnities. We should pray that God would

Remember our wants and enrich us. Sin has impoverished us—by it we have lost all our possessions, and are reduced to the lowest extremity—but God can supply all our needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Remember our weakness and strengthen us. We are insufficient of ourselves either to engage in duty, or to encounter difficulty. Oh to be remembered by Him, who alone can impart unto us that strength we require!

Remember our sorrows and comfort us. In this life there are alternate joys and sorrows, the bright beams of hope mingled with the dark shades of despair; and, if the consciousness of the remembrance of an earthly friend affords such relief to the mind, what is the comfort associated with the persuasion that we have a heavenly Friend, who knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are but dust?

A PARTICIPATION IN THE FAVOR OF GOD. Observe

The characters alluded to. "Thy people." God has a people that are peculiarly his. They are so by distinguishing mercy, as they are chosen in Christ, from before the foundation of the world. They are so by renewing grace; thus they bear the image of the Father, are justified by the righteousness of the Son, and sanctified by the influences of the Spirit. They are so by voluntary consent, as they have given themselves to him.

The blessing implored. It is the Divine favor. There is a peculiar favor God shows to his people—all he does for them is through free and unmerited grace. What David here desires, includes everything essential to our present welfare and future bliss.

THE ENJOYMENT OF THE SALVATION OF GOD. "Oh! visit me with thy salvation." This may refer to temporal deliverances or spiritual comforts. God does this

By the interposition of his providence. Thus he saves and rescues us from innumerable dangers to which we are exposed, and continues us in being.

By the displays of his grace. How delightful are the visits which God pays to the soul! He never comes empty-handed, but with an abundance of good things. He visits us with discoveries of this salvation, and thus we see its fulness; with the

experience of this salvation, and thus we feel its power; with the blessings of this salvation, and thus we enjoy its richness; with the earnests of its full consummation, and thus we long for eternal glory, where we shall be saved to sin no more.

May 31.

THE DEPLORABLE STATE.

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Rom. v. 6

Christ is the grand figure in the picture of the Gospel; the learning and eloquence of ministers are not colors to adorn it, but as the dark ground of the picture, to set it forth more clearly. Christ crucified is the theme of our ministry. We are here led to the contemplation of his death. Here is

A deplorable state described. It is twofold, negative and positive; the one is the want of power, the other is the existence of enmity. "Man is," says Birkett, "without power to resist justice, and without affection to desire mercy; so weak that he trembles at the appearance of a worm, and yet so wicked that he lifts up his head against heaven."

A state of absolute weakness. "We were yet without strength;" that is, deprived of all power to rescue ourselves from the miseries into which our sins had plunged us. Man has incurred the Divine displeasure by sin, and he is without strength to obtain the favor of Heaven; he is polluted in his iniquities, and he is without strength to cleanse his spotted soul; he is far from his Maker by wicked works, and he is without strength to draw near for succor.

A state of actual wickedness. "Ungodly." Man is not only weak and impotent, indisposed towards that which is good, but striving with his Maker, rising up in rebellion against him, and setting him at defiance. His sins had swelled like a mighty deluge, higher and higher, and there were the foamings of rage and passion, and every hateful feeling, till at length they reached to the very heavens, and loudly called for the judgment of an avenging God; but there was no cry for help, there was no expression of sorrow, there was no contrition of heart: "none

of them repented of his evil, saying, What have I done?" But there was mercy in the heart of God; behold in the midst of those black clouds that portend a gathering storm, a star piercing through the thick darkness: it is the star of Bethlehem, and it is the harbinger of a bright and glorious day; see the mantled heavens, gilded with the first rays of the Sun of righteousness that now rises with healing in his wings; the clouds are dispersed, the impending tempest is averted, the sky is serene, the heavens open, and a voice is heard, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."

June 1.

A CALL TO HOLINESS.

"For I am the Lord your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy."—Lev. xi. 44.

In the context we have the various laws and ordinances to be observed by the Jews, in reference to what they were to eat, and what they were to abstain from. The ceremonial law was "a figure for the time then present;" but we live under a different dispensation, and are expressly informed that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost." It is spiritual in its origin, nature, principles, requirements, and ends. Two things may be observed in the passage.

It enjoins an important duty. "Ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy."

Its extensive import. We are not to imagine by the language here employed, that it is in the power of man to sanctify his soul; this is the work of the Spirit; but there is required on our part a diligent use of the means which God has instituted for this end. It includes separation from sin, dedication to God, and a course of holiness.

Its desirable nature. What is the pleasure of sin, when compared with the enjoyment of holiness? The one is transient, like a meteor's glare, suddenly darting across the firmament; the other is enduring, like the never-tiring sun. A course of

holiness is desirable both on a present and future account. It is excellent in its nature, honorable in its character, and extensive in its benefits.

Its indispensable necessity. "Without holiness no man can see the Lord." Without it we are incapacitated for holding communion with him here, or entering into his presence hereafter. Those who are saved are sanctified, and those who are the possessors of happiness are the partakers of holiness.

It supplies a powerful motive. This is twofold, and both in connection with God.

His covenant relation. "For I am the Lord your God." He is the Former of our bodies, the Father of our spirits, the Preserver of our lives, the God of our mercies, and the Author of salvation; should not this urge us to holiness?

His spotless purity. "For I am holy." We may imitate holy people in many things, but they have their imperfections; there is the dross of sin with the gold of grace. But here is an infallible pattern, the only perfect standard of moral excellence: aim, as far as possible, to come up to it: see where you come short, and remember that the way to discern your spots is not to look into the polluted streams of men's lives, but to Him who is the fountain of piety.

June 2.

THE TIMELY DELIVERANCE.

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Rom. v. 6.

The two great subjects of the Bible are man's ruin by sin, and his restoration by grace; on the one hand we behold the misery of the curse, and on the other the mercy of the cross. We have farther in these words

A timely deliverance achieved. This is accomplished by the death of Christ, concerning which we may remark four things.

The fact of his death. "Christ died." The circumstances of his death was peculiarly affecting. Crucifixion was a mode of punishment inflicted on those who had been guilty of the most atrocious deeds, and was attended with the most exquisite pains.

The cause of his death. Our sins called for the wrath and vengeance of God, which he bore as our Surety; but it was love that prompted him to this act of unexampled philanthropy and disinterestedness, "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet paradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

The period of his death. "In due time:" because it was the period arranged in the covenant between the Father and the Son; because it accorded with the ancient predictions that foretold it; because it agreed with the many promises that insured it, and with regard to the awful condition of the world. It was now time that Messiah should put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; there was a general expectation for him as the promised Deliverer: many were looking for redemption in Jerusalem, and waiting for the consolation of Israel.

The effects of his death. These are glorious, both as it respects the perfections of God, and the interests of man. A way is opened for man to the holiest of all. The rolling clouds of incense and pillars of smoke no longer ascend towards heaven; the fire in the temple has gone out, and costly sacrifices, and blood of bulls and goats are no longer required; for that dispensation has passed away, and the Gospel temple has been dedicated, and the altar has been sprinkled with blood more precious than ever was shed by ancient priests in imposing attire, as they waited upon Jehovah in the holiest of all, within the veil.

June 3.

THE HOLY CALLING.

"An holy calling."—2 Tim. i. 9.

Much is said in Scripture of the Christian's calling. There is an external and internal call; the one is the general call of the Gospel, the other is the particular call of the Spirit. To the latter of these our text refers. Let us view it

In its nature. It includes the work of the Spirit in the soul.

It is extensive. This will be seen by considering from and to

what the believer is called ; from darkness to light, from bondage to liberty, from impurity to holiness, from poverty to riches, from degradation to honor, from misery to happiness.

It is secret. There is no outward appearance or audible voice, but God speaks to the soul. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." The Spirit's operations are silent and secret,—

> "His power and glory work within,
> And break the chains of reigning sin."

It is effectual. The heart of man is shut against God. By the word of the Gospel, he knocks and waits for admittance; but it is not till the power of the Spirit is exerted in bursting asunder the iron bars and bolts which fasten it, that the door flies open, and the King of glory enters in. Contemplate this calling

In its property. Why is it designated an holy calling ?

Its Author is holy. "He which hath called you is holy." There may be a clear and comprehensive statement of Divine truth, faithful and affectionate appeals ; learning may unfold its stores, eloquence may dazzle, and rhetoric may strew her flowers, but all will prove unavailing without the Spirit's influence ; he alone can impart the light of wisdom, instil the breath of life, and kindle the flame of love in the soul.

Its designs are holy. The implantation and promotion of holiness is God's end in all his dealings with us, whether providential or gracious. We are called to a holy state, to delight in holy things, to observe holy ordinances, pursue holy objects, and commune with a holy God and holy beings.

Its consummation is holy. It leads to that better country where the atmosphere is pure and untainted ; where everything bears the mark and impress of holiness ; the employments, the pleasures, the worship, and the song, are all connected with holiness. View this calling

In its obligations. Has God called us with an holy calling ? then there should be

Gratitude. Consider where grace found you, an abject slave, in prison ; what it has made you, an adopted child of God ; where it will conduct you, to your Father's house above. Raise your altar, approach your Maker, present your sacrifice, commence your song : "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

Humility. Grace humbles where it elevates; and the more we are loaded with divine benefits, the deeper should we sink under a sense of our unworthiness. The lowest valleys are most fruitful; on them the gentle dew descends from the surrounding hills, and the boughs that are laden with fruit bend towards the earth. The robe of righteousness must always be connected with the garments of humility.

Consistency. "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." As much has been done for you in a way of grace, much is required of you in a way of evidence. Ever keep in view the end of your calling. Love the ways of holiness, follow the practice of holiness, seek an increase in holiness, and long for the period when you shall be perfect in holiness.

June 4.

NEGLECT OF PRAYER.

"They have not called upon God."—Psalm liii. 4.

Atheists, says Henry, are the greatest fools in nature; for they see there is a world that could not make itself, and yet they will not own there is a God that made it. This Psalm begins with an allusion to the atheist, and a very black picture is drawn of him, "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God"—not in his intellect, not in his understanding, not in his judgment, as the conviction of his mind, but in his heart; intimating that it is rather his desire that there was, than his belief that there is, no God. A neglect of calling upon God is one of the many charges here preferred against the ungodly. Observe

A duty implied. It is calling upon God. Prayer is expressed by a variety of terms, such as crying, asking, seeking, knocking, waiting on God, lifting up our eyes and pouring out our hearts. Consider this duty

In its objects. Our design in calling upon God should be to render unto him that adoration and praise which are his due, and to implore those blessings we require. We are to seek the comforts that pertain to this life, but especially those that regard the soul and eternity. Call on him for greater discoveries of his

grace, and renewed instances of his favor, that you may rest in the sunshine of his countenance, and partake of the joys of his salvation.

In its manner. How are we to call upon God? There must be faith, a belief in our sinfulness, God's mercy, Christ's atonement, and the Spirit's teaching — sincerity, for our hearts must be engaged in the work—submission, we must ask for things agreeable to his will—constancy, "continuing instant in prayer."

In its importance. This appears when you consider the relationship in which we stand to God—the blessings he has to bestow—his readiness to confer them—the evil that may be averted—the pleasures that may be experienced—and the advantages that may be obtained by it. Prayer, says one, is a shelter to the soul, a sacrifice to God, and a scourge to the devil.

A SIN EXPOSED. "They have not called upon God." We may apply this charge to two classes.

Those who neglect prayer altogether. On how many dwellings might the words with truth be inscribed with regard to their inhabitants, "They have not called upon God." How many neglect secret prayer, and thus call not upon God in the closet; others disregard public ordinances, and call not upon God in the sanctuary; and others have never erected a domestic altar, and call not upon God in the family.

Those who perform it with indifference. Many adopt the form of prayer, who know nothing of its spirit; and we have yet to say of multitudes of professors with all their high notions, self-conceit, and religious pretension, "They have not called upon God." The mercy-seat has been approached, sacrifices have been presented, the wood of outward forms has been gathered, and the halt and the maimed have been brought to the altar; but there has been wanting the fire of fervor and devotion, and so the offering has been rejected.

Come, let us pray; the mercy-seat
  Invites the fervent prayer,
And Jesus ready stands to greet
  The contrite spirit there:
O, loiter not, nor longer stay
From him who loves us; let us pray.

June 5.

THE CHRISTIAN'S ESTABLISHMENT AND PRESERVATION.

"But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil."
2 Thess. iii. 3.

Paul commences this chapter by requesting an interest in the prayers of the believing Thessalonians, for the general diffusion of the Gospel, that it might have "free course;" for its special application, that it might "be glorified" in the conversion of sinners and the consistency of saints; for the preservation and safety of himself and his fellow-laborers; "that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men." In this passage we have

An encouraging truth. Here are two things God engages to do for his people: the one regards our progress in that which is good; the other respects our protection from that which is evil.

Our establishment. "Who shall stablish you." This implies the reception of certain things in which we are established. All believers have received the truth; and it is desirable for their Christian prosperity and comfort, that they should be established in it. 1 Peter v. 10. God establishes his people in knowledge, faith, love, hope, and every gift of grace. This is opposed to a wavering, undecided state of mind. Those who are unstable in religious things cannot excel; it is the steady, firm, and deeply-rooted tree that is likely to bear most fruit; and not that which is continually being transplanted into different soils. There are some who are as wandering stars in the spiritual firmament, having no regular course, and shining in no fixed sphere, instead of blending their light with some constellation in the church below, that it may appear more visible to those who are surrounded with darkness in the world.

Our preservation. "And keep you from evil." There is much evil to which we are exposed, both within and without; there is an evil heart of unbelief, which discovers itself in departing from the living God; and an evil world, full of snares and temptations: we cannot keep ourselves, but God has promised to do it, and preserve us to his heavenly kingdom.

The certainty of its performance. The argument is drawn from the faithfulness of God. "The Lord is faithful."

In his essential character. His name is truth. He cannot act on contrary principles to those of faithfulness and truth; it would be inconsistent with his very nature to do so. He is faithful.

To his covenant engagements. He has made a covenant with his people: here every necessary arrangement and adequate provision is made; it is ordered in all things, and sure, as it rests on an immutable Jehovah. He is faithful

To his gracious promise. In the world how often are expectations raised, that are never realized; but not so with regard to the believer. Friends may betray, and, leaning on the flattering promises of the world, we may be the subjects of the most grievous disappointment; but, trusting in God, we cannot be ashamed.

June 6.

GRACE AND PEACE.

"Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."
1 Thess. i. 1.

The Thessalonians had received the word in much affliction; the standard of the cross was not planted among them without much opposition from the enemy's ranks. For them the Apostle expresses his best desires. Let us view the blessings he here implores for them in three ways.

In their fulness. "Grace be unto you and peace." Here is the best wish we can express for those whom we love. Examine them each separately.

Grace. But did not the Thessalonians possess grace? Had they not received the truth in the love of it? Yes, but they require more grace. What would be the consequence if God were to leave us to our own resources? How soon would the lamp go out, if the oil were withheld—how soon would the well dry up, if the springs were to cease flowing—what would become of the plants and flowers of the garden, if the genial influence of the sun, and the fructifying qualities of the showers from heaven, were no more felt? What would the new-born infant do without the mother's care, and the nurse's attentions? So the subjects of grace must be trained up, tutored, and made

meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. "He giveth more grace:"—grace for every season, duty, trial, and exigency; quickening grace to enliven us, sustaining grace to support us, enlightening grace to teach us, and comforting grace to console us.

Peace. Where grace is bestowed, peace is enjoyed; the living fountain of grace in the heart sends forth the silent streams of peace in the soul; and although sometimes those streams may be rippled and agitated with the rising of the tide of sorrow, yet the troubled waters shall again be smoothed, and peace shall flow like a river. Contemplate these blessings

In their origin. "From God our Father." Notice

His essential title. This grace and peace are from God; they spring from his heart, which is the dwelling-place of his love. He is emphatically called "the God of all grace."

His endearing relationship. "Our Father." None can rightly use this appellation but those who are adopted into his family, and regenerated by his grace. How great is the love, how kind are the dealings, how important are the instructions, and how rich are the provisions of this Father! Look at these blessings.

In their medium. "And the Lord Jesus Christ." He is the only medium of communication from earth to heaven, and from heaven to earth. He is called "our peace." Saints on earth and saints in heaven unite, though in different strains, in the grand chorus, the sentiment of which nothing can equal, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

June 7.

THE CHARACTER OF HEAVEN'S INHABITANTS.

"Thy people also shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified."—Isa. lx. 21.

The chapter of which these words are a part, has a primary reference to the happy state of the Jews after their deliverance from the Babylonish captivity; but it also points us to the latter day's glory, when the Jews shall be brought in with the fulness of the Gentiles. The prophets, in describing the glories of the

church militant, often refer in the most glowing language to the joys of the church triumphant; and in this chapter there are many expressions that will only apply to the state of believers in glory. Considering this passage, therefore, as a description of the new Jerusalem above, let us notice

THE CHARACTER OF ITS INHABITANTS. Here is a threefold representation given of them, partly in the language of fact, and partly in figure.

They are his people. A people formed peculiarly for himself; not ouly created by his power and sustained by his Providence, but redeemed by his grace. Observe the particular description—"righteous." None are so by nature; but all believers are so in the act of justification, and in the work of sanctification; or by the remission of their sins, and the renovation of their souls. Notice the universal application—"Thy people shall be all righteous." They must be so, for God has declared it; they must be so in the very nature of things, for the "unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

They are his branch. This you will perceive is the language of figure. Believers are not withered branches, tied on to the true vine by profession, but flourishing ones united to the root; planted in the garden of the church, being removed from the wilderness of the world to a more congenial soil, and bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit.

They are his work. They are so as creatures, but peculiarly so as Christians. Whatever change they have experienced, he is the Author of it. Here is a work of Almighty power, sovereign grace, and boundless mercy; the admiration of angels, and the envy of devils. He commences it in conversion—carries it on by his Spirit in the heart, and will consummate it in glory everlasting. Let me seriously inquire if I am among the number of God's people. Do I bear the marks and evidences that belong to them? This is a question of paramount importance, which must be settled ere long.

Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I his, or am I not?
If I love, why am I thus?
Why this dull and lifeless frame?
Hardly, sure, can they be worse,
Who have never heard his name.

June 8.

THE PERPETUITY OF HEAVEN'S JOYS.

"Thy people also shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified."—Isa. lx. 21.

Amidst the storms and tempests of life with which the Christian pilgrim is beset, how delightful is it for him to retire to the peaceful streams of that river which makes glad the city of God! Here he experiences a foretaste of those enjoyments which are in reserve for him in the heavenly paradise. Let us now contemplate heaven in

The perpetuity of its joys. "They shall inherit the land forever." Observe

The place of destination. "The land." The land of Canaan was typical of the heavenly state in many points of view. It is a joyful land. There is everything to produce the highest pleasure and satisfaction—as they are free from sin, out of the reach of sorrow, and in close and uninterrupted communion with God. It is an extensive land. Here our enjoyments are limited and partial; there they shall be full and unbounded. It is a peaceful land. There universal harmony prevails, and the mind is calm and unruffled as the face of nature, on a quiet summer's evening. It is a holy land. As there is no sorrow to disturb, so there is no sin to defile.

The manner of possession. "They shall inherit the land." They shall enter on it, not by natural right, but by gracious permission; by virtue of their adoption into the family of God. "If children, then heirs." They shall inherit it as they are chosen by the sovereign will of the Father, ransomed by the precious blood of the Son, and renewed by the gracious power of the Spirit.

The term of enjoyment. "Forever." It is an inheritance cemented by age, and enhanced by enjoyment. The most beautiful garland which the world can weave soon withers on the brow of him who wears it, and is fastened with a thread which is liable to break at every breeze; but eternity is the knot that binds the crown of life, that diadem of glory which fadeth not away.

The design of the whole. "That I may be glorified." But how is this the case? God is glorified

In the salvation of his Son. The name, character, government, and perfections of the Deity are glorified in the redemption of Christ.

In the work of grace. In the conversion of every sinner, and in the maturing of the graces in every believer, glory redounds to God.

In the eternal praises of his people. Where the heart has been opened by the power of God's grace, the mouth will be open in the celebration of his glory. Praise is the very employment of heaven; and glory to God will be the theme of every tongue, the feeling of every heart, and the burden of every song.

June 9.

FEAR AND CONFIDENCE.

"What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee."—Psalm lvi. 3.

The circumstances under which this Psalm was penned, are of the most trying description. David fled from the fury of Saul to Gath, and there fell into the hands of the Philistines. You may read the historical account in 1 Sam. xxi. 10, 11. In the passage we have

A season of distress. "What time I am afraid." This was a time of fear to David—and there are periods in the history and experience of the believer when he is afraid. His fears arise from various sources.

Personal affliction. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness." How many mourn in secret, and have their silent misgivings, with which none but themselves are acquainted! Perhaps there is a long and protracted illness, a sudden reverse of circumstances, or some unexpected visitation of distress, which causes fear and trembling.

Relative trials. There is much to try us in connection with the world and mankind—in our families and social circles. How often does death snap asunder the most tender ties, and treachery betray the most sacred trust! Some have to mourn the death, and others the impiety and unconcern, of relatives.

Mental distress. Christians have not only their outward,

but inward sources of fear; and these arise from the temptations of the great adversary, and the remains of corruption within. Turn from the dark to the bright side of the subject, and notice,

A SOURCE OF RELIEF. "I will trust in thee." Confidence in God is calculated to allay our fears. Look at

Its object. It is God himself. In the season of distress, you may as well attempt to rest on a straw, or be defended by a shadow, as to seek solid relief from the world. There must be confidence in his perfections, covenant, word, promises, and grace.

Its nature. How is it to be exercised? Entirely—some try to divide their confidence between God and the world; but we must rest all on him, and let no other trust intrude. Joyfully—for there is everything in God to excite such a feeling. Continually—we must never give up our hold: "Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward."

Its reasonableness. Who can lay a greater claim to our confidence than he in whose hands our breath is, and whose are all our ways? The character of God, the testimony of his word, and the experience of his people, all unite to show its reasonableness—death, judgment, and eternity will prove it.

June 10.

THE SIN OF REJECTING CHRIST.

"He came unto his own, and his own received him not."—John i. 11.

"GOD manifest in the flesh," is the mystery of mysteries. Surely at his coming, all mankind ought to have paid him homage, and welcomed his approach; while the whole creation re-echoed with the sound of harmony, love, and praise, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." But no—"He came unto his own, and his own received him not." Observe here

A DISINTERESTED ACT. "He came unto his own." Consider

Whence he came. From heaven, where he received the

praises and acclamations of countless myriads of shining hosts. How dignified his character! How exalted his honors!

Where he came. Into this world; a distant spot in his dominions; "unto his own." His own territories, or his own people, the Jews; those who were his in a peculiar manner, as his covenant-professing people, his kindred according to the flesh.

How he came. He appeared in human form; the splendor of his divinity was veiled in the cloud of his humanity. Jesus tabernacled among us, clothed in a body like our own. He came in a lowly condition, yet willingly.

Why he came. He came to repair the ruins of the fall, to reveal to us the glories of immortality, and open up a new and living way to the holiest of all, that sinners might once more approach the offended Majesty of heaven, and receive those blessings that alone can save the soul.

AN AWFUL CRIME. "His own received him not." Observe, with respect to this sin of rejecting the Saviour, four things:

Its nature. The Jews believed not his Divine mission, treated him as an impostor, and at last crucified him. But is not Christ rejected now? Are there not many who disown him as their Redeemer, slight his offers of mercy, crucify him afresh, and put him to an open shame?

Its cause. Whence is it that Christ is not received? He comes to us in the preaching of the Gospel, and entreats us to embrace him. It arises from ignorance, enmity, prejudice, love of the world, self-righteousness, insensibility, and carnal indifference.

Its aggravation. Can we imagine a greater crime? Such individuals sin in spite of God's goodness, dash away from them the cup of salvation; and while with one hand they receive his benefits, with the other they bid him defiance.

Its danger. Those who reject Christ expose themselves to the awful tempest of Jehovah's wrath, and have no cloak for their sins. O my soul! receive him, and make him thy Portion, Redeemer, Friend, Saviour, and thy all.

On thee alone my hope relies;
Beneath thy cross I fall,
My Lord, my life, my sacrifice,
My Saviour, and my all.

June 11.

LOOKING AND WAITING FOR GOD.

"Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me."—Micah vii. 7.

The times in which the prophet Micah lived, were marked by every kind of wickedness and depravity. There appears to have been a general declension from God and his ways. It was seen among the various classes of society, in the unnatural disposition manifested by relatives, and the betraying of confidence in professed friends. It is well when our troubles induce us to look more towards God, and less to creatures. This was the case with the prophet. Observe

His claim. It is the highest that can be made by any created being.

The interesting title of God. "The God of my salvation." This is true of temporal deliverances, but more especially of spiritual blessings. He is the God of our salvation, as his wisdom devised it, his grace purposed it, his Son accomplished it, his Spirit applies it, his word reveals it, and his ministers announce it.

The appropriating act of faith. "*My* salvation, *my* God." Here is the very soul and spirit of religion; its personal application. What a portion has the Christian! "My God;" his perfections are mine, engaged for my comfort and salvation; his covenant is mine, he has shown it to me; his word is mine, hidden in my heart; his grace is mine, implanted in my soul; his providence is mine, to direct me; his promises are mine, to comfort me; his ordinances are mine, to refresh me; and his angels are mine, as ministering spirits on earth, and associated companions in heaven.

His resolution. Two things he here resolves to do, and both are very fit and proper exercises for the Christian.

To look. But where? Some look to the world; to its riches, pleasures, fame, and fortune, for comfort; but the believer looks higher. It is a look of faith, we believe God's word; a look of love, we admire while we gaze; a look of desire, we long for fresh discoveries; a look of humility, we bow in adoration; a look of hope, for though clouds sometimes gather around us, the beams of hope dart through them,

and we resolve with Jonah to look again towards God's holy temple.

To wait. It is our privilege that God waits to be gracious; it is our duty to wait that he may bestow his grace on us. We must wait on him, depending on his Spirit, urged by our wants, and encouraged by his promises.

His assurance. "My God will hear me." Every Christian may be confident of this. But how? From his gracious character, the mediation of his Son, the testimony of his word, and his own past experience.

June 12.

THE ALMIGHTY GOD.

"I am the Almighty God."—Gen. xvii. 1.

So said God to Abraham! What an extraordinary char acter was he who is called, by way of eminence, "the father of the faithful!" He honored God by the strength of his faith, and God honored him by the manifestations of his favor! In the consideration of this interesting passage, let us here remark

What God is. "I am the Almighty God." God is made known by a variety of names and titles; the one before us is very encouraging to his friends, but very terrific to his enemies. While he is Almighty to reward the one, he is Almighty to punish the other. The Hebrew word is El-shaddai, which is translated in our old English version, "I am God all-sufficient." This name of God includes

The unlimited extent of his power. We have innumerable evidences of this, in the various works of nature, from the mightiest to the meanest; in the diversified operations of his providence, extending to everything that he has made; and in the sovereign displays of his grace, which gladden the hearts of his people; but these are only "the hidings of his power." Who can estimate what the full development of it would be?

The universal dominion of his providence. It extends to the highest heavens, over angelic hosts, and redeemed spirits, to the farthest boundaries of the world; over all its inhabitants,

rational and irrational; and to the most distant corner of hell, over devils and lost spirits.

The rich abundance of his resources. He is God Almighty, or God all-sufficient and enough. He is so in himself; holy, happy and blessed, independently of any of the beings whom he has made; and he has a sufficiency for us. There is enough in him to supply every other defect, to satisfy all our desires, however enlarged, to sanctify our souls however polluted, to justify our persons, however guilty, and to enrich us however poor. Where beside can you find such a source?

June 13.

WALKING BEFORE GOD.

"Walk before me, and be thou perfect."—Gen. xvii. 1.

The Christian life is frequently compared to a walk, which intimates the existence of a spiritual principle, the exercise of that principle bringing it into action, and the increase and progression of it. Believers walk after God, as servants—with God, as friends—and before him, as children. We are led here to the contemplation of

What God requires. The exhortation here given is to be taken under certain limitations. When we are called upon to be perfect, it does not intimate that sinless perfection is attainable here, but that we are to be sincere, and in every possible way endeavor to advance towards such a holy and happy state. Four things are involved in God's requirement.

A constant recognition of his presence. How few are there who cultivate such a desirable feeling! Walking before any individual of distinction is calculated to make us particular and circumspect as to our carriage: if the mind is so influenced by the presence of a fellow-creature, how much more should it be with the consciousness that we are surrounded with the Deity!

A sincere obedience to his laws. Thus we are enjoined to walk in his statutes and ordinances, and to keep his way. We must walk before him in all religious duties and devotional engagements, whether secret, social, domestic, or public. We are really what we are, before God.

An earnest aim at his glory. This should be our motive for action, and the governing principle of our minds, that God in all things may be glorified.

A holy imitation of his perfections. There are many of the essential attributes of Jehovah that are inimitable; but his moral perfections are placed before us as our pattern. Thus we are called upon to be followers of God, to be merciful as he is merciful, holy as he is holy, and perfect as he is perfect. There is a sense in which we are all walking before God. No power or policy can screen us from the eye of his Omniscience; like the lightning's flash, or the meridian sunbeam, it penetrates into the innermost recesses of the heart, and throws a glare of light on things concealed from human eye.

June 14.

THE CHRISTIAN'S RESOLUTION.

"Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee."
Psalm lxiii. 3.

The Christian sees through a different medium to that of the ungodly, and forms his estimate of things according to a Divine principle implanted within him; while they judge after the flesh and according to their sinful inclinations. In this passage we have the noble determination of David, who was thus divinely taught. Observe

The favor he acknowledges. "Thy loving-kindness." This is a delightful theme. Consider

Its divine source. It is composed of two words, the first referring to cause, and the second to effect. There may be kindness shown where there is no particular feeling of love. When we see an object of distress, we may be prompted to afford relief, from the common principles and feelings of our nature, while there is no love or affection exercised towards that object. But here is *loving*-kindness.

Its comprehensive nature. It includes all needful supplies, the arrangements and provisions of the covenant, that spiritual life which believers possess, the gift of God's Spirit, the tokens of his favor, and the communications of his grace.

Its suitable character. Loving-kindness is displayed in a way

suited to our condition as sinners. God dispenses mercy to the miserable, and pardon to the guilty.

The estimate he forms. "Thy loving-kindness is better than life." Because

It supplies the deficiencies of life. One has observed a man may have enough of the world to sink him, but he can never have enough to satisfy him. There is a dissatisfaction of mind necessarily connected with all creature enjoyments—but the loving-kindness of God puts us in possession of that which is infinitely better than life.

It alleviates the sorrows of life. It enables the Christian to recognize, in all his afflictions, a Father's gentle hand, sovereign love, and gracious design; and assures us that, when the precious metal of grace has been tried, and the worthless dross of sin has been consumed, we shall come forth from the furnace of affliction, as gold that has been seven times purified.

It sweetens the comforts of life. We may have all things richly to enjoy, from the bountiful hand of God's providence, while we have no share in the blessings of his grace. His loving-kindness gives a relish to our common mercies.

The resolution he makes. "My lips shall praise thee." There must be a verbal acknowledgment of an internal feeling; the homage of the heart, accompanied with the expression of the lip, and a practical exemplification of it in a holy and devoted life. Christians have to praise God, not only as rational creatures, but renewed beings. It is right that the heart he has changed should beat with his love, and that the tongue he has loosed should celebrate his praise.

June 15.

SALVATION OF GRACE.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."—Eph. ii. 8, 9.

Grace is Paul's favorite theme in his epistles, and a sweet topic it is; it is the leading feature and characteristic of the Gospel. We must refer to it as the source of all our mercies, and the spring of all our enjoyments. Four things are here mentioned respecting our salvation.

Its nature. The apostle speaks of it as present: he does not say ye shall be, but ye are saved; because it is the privilege of believers, even here on earth, to partake of heavenly enjoyments. Salvation consists in

A deliverance from the greatest evils. We are saved from the guilt of sin, by being clothed in the righteousness of Christ; from the pollution of sin, by being sanctified by the Spirit; from the love and dominion of sin, by the implantation of a master principle in the heart. We are saved from Satan's tyranny, the law's curses, the pangs of a guilty conscience, Jehovah's wrath, and the torments of the lost in hell.

The enjoyment of the greatest good. Believers are not only released from their abject and miserable condition by nature, but put in possession of positive good. All spiritual blessings are imparted to them. The raging tempest is hushed, and there is a great calm; the spirit is no longer trembling and agitated under a sense of conscious guilt; the olive branch of peace is placed in the bosom, and a still small voice whispers, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." "Ye are saved." Christians, already you enjoy a sweet foretaste of the joy you shall feel, when in glory you have obtained the end of your faith, even the salvation of your soul.

Its origin. "For by grace are ye saved." Three things will prove salvation to be of grace with regard to man.

He has no claim in the merit of it. Have we not forfeited all claims to the favor of God, and cut ourselves off from communion with him? He might in justice have sent the destroying angel to punish us with eternal destruction; but in mercy he sent his beloved Son to redeem us.

He has no power for the accomplishment of it. Man is spoken of as being "without strength;" as universally depraved in all his powers and passions, and by sin incapacitated for holding communion with God, and totally unable to work out his own salvation.

He has no inclination for the reception of it. There is not only an alienation of the mind from God, but a rebellion of the heart against God. Christian, did you not find it so till the Almighty wrought in your soul, and made you willing in the day of his power?

'Twas the same love that spread the feast
That sweetly forced us in.

June 16.

RULES FOR PRAYER.

"I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting."—1 Tim. ii. 8.

Paul here speaks with authority, as he had received a commission from God. The contents of this verse are highly important. Let us briefly glance at them.

The nature of the duty. It is the exercise of prayer. Prayer is an offering, which, if not presented on the altar of the heart, with the fire of fervent devotion, cannot come up with acceptance before God. It is the breath of the new creature, the spiritual pulsation of the soul.

The scenes of its exercise. "Everywhere." This includes prayer in the secret of retirement, at the domestic altar, in the social circle, and in the solemn assembly. The exercise is to be continual; that is, we are to cultivate a prayerful spirit, and a devotional frame. If this duty were observed, how many evils would be prevented! what vast and inestimable benefits would be enjoyed!

The manner of its performance. Three rules are here laid down, which we do well to observe.

Purity. "Lifting up holy hands." This may allude to the custom which prevailed among the Jews of washing the hands before engaging in the services of the temple, and this was to express their desire of inward purity. David says, "I will wash my hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O Lord!"

Love. "Without wrath," that is, in a spirit of Christian love and kindness. The angry passions must be quelled, and the leaven of malice must not be mixed up with our devotions.

Faith. Without "doubting." It is the prayer of faith that prevails with God. There must be a belief in our exigencies, and Christ's fulness and sufficiency to supply all our wants. Jeremy Taylor beautifully observes, "Prayer is the daughter of charity, and the sister of meekness; and he that prays to God in an angry spirit, is like him who retires into a battle to meditate, and sets up his closet in the out quarters of an enemy, and chooses a frontier garrison to be wise in. Anger is a per-

fect alienation of the mind from prayer; and therefore is contrary to that attention which presents our prayers in a *right line* to heaven."

June 17.

THE PROPERTIES AND END OF THE LAW.

"Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Rom. vi. 12.

It is of the greatest importance that we should have clear and distinct views of Christian doctrines. Many individuals have very confused ideas of the precise nature and uses of the law and Gospel, and confound one with the other. The passage before us contains a high encomium on the moral law. Let us contemplate it in

The properties by which it is distinguished.

It is holy. Its Author is so, and nothing of an opposite tendency could possibly emanate from him. Its matter is holy, being itself a transcript of the mind and will of God. Its requirements are so; it enjoins holiness, and by the most powerful motives encourages us to pursue it.

It is just. With regard to the whole government of God, and his dealings with mankind, we may say, "The ways of the Lord are right." The law is impartial, and renders to every man according to his works.

It is good. "The law is good, if a man use it lawfully." One has observed that it is essentially, originally, materially, morally, pleasantly, and profitably good to a believer. It is intended to do us good—to promote our best interests.

The ends for which it is given. In general it is for the glory of the great Lawgiver, and the benefit of his subjects. More particularly, it is of use

To the sinner. "The law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." It opens the wound, and the Gospel discovers the remedy. By the law is the knowledge of sin, by the Gospel is the knowledge of salvation; the one shows us our emptiness, the other points us to Christ's fulness; the one thunders vengeance, the other whispers peace.

To the saint. It is true, in one sense, we are not under the law, that is, as a covenant of works; but it is equally true, in another sense, that we are under the law, as a rule of life. If the Gospel shows us our privilege, the law points out to us our duty. If the Gospel tells us how we may die happily, the law tells us how we may live righteously. If the Gospel imparts light to the mind, the law is a lamp to the feet. If the Gospel is a glass in which we behold God in the face of Jesus Christ, as unfolding the riches of his grace; the law is a mirror in which we see him in his own glory, as displaying the rectitude of his government. Let us therefore go to the law to see what God would have us to be, and to the Gospel to behold what he can make us; and rejoice that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

June 8.

SALVATION THROUGH FAITH.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."—Eph. iii. 8, 9.

Of his fulness, says John, have all we received, and grace for grace; that is, observes the excellent Mr. Brooks, as the paper from the press receives letter for letter, or as the wax from the seal receives impression for impression, or as the glass from the image receives face for face, so does the weakest saint receive from Jesus Christ. Our salvation is of grace. Let us now contemplate

Its means. "Through faith;" that is, instrumentally; faith is exercised in the righteousness of Christ.

The nature of faith. What is it? It is not a mere notion in the head, but an act of the mind; the more simple and scriptural the definition given of it, the better. It is the firm and entire resting of the soul on the atonement of Christ for acceptance with God.

The operation of faith. It is a principle that cannot lie dormant in the mind. Genuine faith is always connected with Divine light, holy love, ardent desires, and practical godliness. These are the evidences of its existence.

The source of faith. "And that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." Here it is expressly stated, that faith is not of human, but of Divine origin. We are commanded to believe, and he who issues the command imparts strength for the obedience of it. Faith is our own act, as we are wrought on by the gracious influences of the Spirit of God.

Its end. "Not of works, lest any man should boast."

The fact stated. Salvation is not meritoriously of works. There must be works as the effects of the gracious implanted principle; but it is not of works, as the moving cause. The sad degenerate state of human nature affords us an ample proof of this. We may just as well attempt to level the lofty trees of the forest with a gentle touch of the finger; to overturn with a breath the stupendous mountain, whose summit pierces the clouds; or to move the world with a lever of straw, as, with our poor performances, to remove the load of our guilt, and avert the awful consequences of Jehovah's indignation.

The reason assigned. "Lest any man should boast." Man is prone to the feeling of pride and vain glory. He does not like to be an humble petitioner at the footstool of Divine mercy; but ere he becomes a partaker of salvation, the lofty look must be humbled, and the Lord alone exalted, "that no flesh should glory in his presence." This subject should excite our gratitude for God's grace, it should lead us to humility for man's ruined estate, it should encourage our hopes for salvation.

June 19.

PARTICIPATION WITH GOD'S PEOPLE.

"That I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance."—Psalm cvi. 5.

What a marked difference is there between the men of the world and the children of God! They differ in their views and opinions, the objects of their desire, the principles on which they act, the motives by which they are influenced, the sources of their grief, and the springs of their comfort. The one are seeking happiness in the world, the other can be satisfied with nothing short of an interest in God. Observe in this passage,

The characters described. Believers are spoken of as

His chosen. Israel was a chosen nation, peculiarly favored by God; and every true Christian is a chosen vessel; chosen to holiness, happiness, honor, glory, and immortality.

His nation. They are set apart for himself, under his government, and for his glory. As a nation, he has founded them, given them national laws and regulations, rights and privileges. They are a holy, royal, increasing, and happy nation.

His inheritance. Sometimes God is called the inheritance of his people, at other times they are called his inheritance. This term shows the interest he takes in them. This inheritance has been purchased by his Son, and is daily increasing. "Ask of me," says the Father, "and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance."

THE PRIVILEGES ENJOYED. Two are here mentioned.

The reception of good. "The good of thy chosen." There is a peculiar good that belongs to believers as the people of God. While others taste the common mercies that come from his bountiful hand, they enjoy the special blessings that flow from his compassionate heart. It is a solid, substantial, reasonable, divine, soul-satisfying, incomparable, infinite, and eternal good.

The expression of joy. "The gladness of thy nation." They cannot but be joyful who are the recipients of such inestimable privileges. They express gladness at the choice which they have made, the change they have experienced, and the hope they are enabled to cherish.

THE DESIRE EXPRESSED. David wished

To participate in their privileges. "That I may *see* the good of thy chosen." This does not so much refer to the observation of the mind, as the experience of the heart. Many see the good of God's people, who do not partake in it. "Oh! *taste and see* that the Lord is good."

To unite in their joys. "That I may *rejoice* in the gladness of thy nation." The worldling desires to be found among his ungodly companions, mingling with them in their unhallowed pleasures: how different are the wishes of believers!

To exult in their triumphs. "That I may *glory* with thine inheritance." Boasting in ourselves, or our own performances, is excluded; but we may make our boast in the Lord, and triumph in his grace. This is not incompatible with the deepest humility.

June 20.

GOD'S KNOWLEDGE OF OUR PATH.

"When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path." Psalm cxlii. 3.

The complete adaptation of the promises of God's word to the varied wants and exigencies of man, may be considered as an unanswerable argument for its Divine authenticity and sufficiency. The Bible teaches us our duty in prosperity, and directs us to the only true source of comfort in adversity. David felt its power, rejoiced in its discoveries, and experienced its sweetness. We have here

A distressing period. "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me." Whence do our mournful thoughts arise? We may divide them into two classes:—

Temporal. Sometimes God sees fit to visit his people with bodily maladies; many suffer in this way. Then there are the trials and vexations of the world, the blasting of high expectations, and the failure of long-concerted plans. On the sea of human life, there is many a raging billow and foaming wave; here and there are to be seen the wreck of many a fair hope, and sometimes the waters seem ready to engulf us, and our spirits are overwhelmed. The other source to which we refer is

Spiritual. That which regards the condition of the soul. How often is the spirit overwhelmed on a review of our misimprovement of religious opportunities, the little benefit we have derived from the abundance of means we have enjoyed, our scanty knowledge, weak faith, cold affections, languid hope, shallow experience, poor attainments, dormant zeal, and many imperfections! But here is

A consolatory reflection. "Then thou knewest my path." Thus Job, when in trial, said, "He knoweth the way that I take." The comfort is drawn not from God's mere knowledge of our path, but his readiness at all times to help us. See Deut. ii. 7; Psalm xxxi. 7.

He knows the difficulties of our path, and will help us. Earthly friends may be acquainted with our peculiar trial, while they are unable to afford us relief; but his knowledge is always combined with power, so that he can, and with love, so that he will, help us.

He knows the temptations of our path, and will succor us. We are tempted to forget God, and to forsake his way; but what a consolation is it to our minds that he knoweth our path!

He knows the dangers of our path, and will defend us. There is no enemy he is unacquainted with. He knows the malignity, power, subtlety, and craft of all our foes, and will deliver us from every evil work and device.

He knows the perplexities of our path, and will guide us. Sometimes our way is dark and cloudy, and we know not what step to take next: what a mercy that our way is not hidden from him! He will guide us in darkness, unto death, through the dreary vale, to glory everlasting; where we shall know that he has led us by a right way to the city of habitation.

June 21.

THE CHRISTIAN'S EXERCISE AND EXPECTATION.

"My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him."—Psalm lxii. 5.

How different are the frames and feelings of God's people! —sometimes they are on the mount of joy, anon in the valley of despair; now singing with the lark, then mourning with the dove; one day, exercising strong confidence in God, the next, doubting their interest in him. On earth there are many black-letter days in the Christian's spiritual almanac; but in heaven every day shall be a golden one, and there shall be no eclipse of the Sun of righteousness. In trying seasons, David enjoyed God as his comforter, and desired still to wait on him. Two things may be here remarked respecting the Christian.

THE PECULIARITY OF HIS DUTY. Waiting on God.

It is comprehensive. It includes the whole of religion, and implies a sense of our wants, a belief of God's readiness to supply them, and a patient expectation of the soul to receive them.

It is sincere. "My *soul*." Waiting on God is more than the external performance of the services of religion; it is the act of the soul, the exercise of the mind, and the movement of the spirit.

It is personal. "Wait *thou*." In real and experimental religion, the mantle of form must be cast aside, and then the soul

will appear as it is in God's sight, whose scrutinizing eye penetrates into the darkest corners of the human breast. I may wait during the service with the devout congregation, and yet not wait on God.

It is exclusive. "*Only* upon God." Where else shall we go? To the world? It cannot satisfy us: when we attempt to grasp it, it bursts like a bubble in our hands.

THE SOURCE OF HIS HOPE. "For my expectation is from him."

What does it involve? What are his expectations? Every needful blessing, journeying mercies for the way, and crowning mercies for the home: he expects much here, but more hereafter.

On what is it founded? Many cherish expectations that are never realized; but the Christian has the best security,—the word of God, the covenant of grace, the blood of Christ, the influences of the Spirit, and the dealings of God with his people in every age.

Whom does it regard? Those who are renewed in the spirit of their mind, and devoted to God. Let us wait on God continually, even till death, and then all our glorious anticipations shall be more than realized.

June 22.

THE PROPERTIES OF CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

"And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments."—1 John ii. 3.

IN the context, Jesus is set forth as our Advocate. He pleads the sinner's cause in the court of heaven. But the subject for our present contemplation is Christian knowledge. Notice

ITS PROPERTIES. "We know him," that is, Christ.

It is glorious in its object. Paul speaks of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. It surpasses all the learning of the world. It is the knowledge of Christ in the excellences of his character, the value of his atonement, the extent of his love, the treasures of his grace, and the reasonableness of his requirements.

It is peculiar in its nature. It is very different from that

theoretical acquaintance with divine things that is possessed by nominal Christians. This knowledge is personal, and leads us to individualize ourselves, and view religion as a matter between God and our souls. It is experimental: while there is light in the mind, there is love in the heart; while the judgment is informed, the soul is impressed. It is spiritual and saving, and associates our ideas, desires, and reflections, with spiritual objects.

It is Divine in its communication. The Spirit alone chases away the dark clouds of ignorance and error from the benighted mind, and pours into it the rays of heavenly light. While he places before us the lessons we are to learn, he gives us a capacity to receive them, an understanding to know their richness, a heart to feel their influence, and a spirit to enjoy their sweetness.

It is delightful in its results. Oh! who can estimate the value of this knowledge? It is a tree whose fruits are delicious to the taste, and which thrives by the genial influence of the Sun of righteousness, and the heavenly dews of the Divine Spirit; and here the believer may come and regale himself, without fearing the flaming sword of the cherubim. To drop the metaphor, this knowledge affords pleasure to the mind, joy to the soul, and peace to the conscience. If its effects are so glorious even here, what will be its results in that world of light

> "Where knowledge grows without decay,
> And love shall never die!"

June 23.

THE TEST OF CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

"And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments."
1 John ii. 3.

In the experience of the Christian, there is, and ever must be, an inseparable connection between principle and practice. The possession of a heavenly principle will uniformly be associated with the pursuit of a holy practice. Let us now consider Christian knowledge in

Its test. The existence of Divine grace is one thing, but the

enjoyment of Christian assurance is another. How are we to know that we know Christ? Our inward experience and the Spirit's testimony prove the fact. But our text leads us to an external evidence connected with the life—"If we keep his commandments." This obedience must be

Sincere in its principle. Much depends on the motives which influence us in the service of God. The motive stamps the action. If we would wish for acceptance with God, there must be purity of intention, and sincerity of aim.

Cheerful in its manner. It is not to be like the obedience of slaves to a tyrant whom they fear; but that of sons to a father whom they love. If we felt more of the constraining influence of the love of Christ, we should be more cheerful in duty. "I will run," says David, "in the way of thy commands; when thou shalt enlarge my heart."

Universal in its extent. There must be an impartial regard to the laws of God—and the believer is called to engage in painful as well as pleasing duties—and to render passive submission, as well as active obedience, to the Divine will. We must kiss the rod of affliction, as well as bow to the sceptre of his love.

Constant in its duration. There must be patient continuance in well-doing, and perseverance to the end—all our acts of obedience will not have the weight of a feather in the scale of our acceptance with God—but they will give proof of that acceptance—inasmuch as the root of grace is known by the fruits of holiness. After we have done all, we must retire beneath the shadow of the cross, and exclaim,—We are unprofitable servants.

June 24.

KNOWING THE LORD.

"And thou shalt know the Lord."—Hosea ii. 20.

Nothing can be more false and erroneous than to say that ignorance is the mother of devotion. She is a mother, and has a large offspring, prejudice, superstition, and every species of vice and dissipation. There can be no right feeling, either towards God or man, while ignorance envelops the mind. The union that subsists between God and his people is compared to the

marriage relation, and the possession of knowledge is necessary to the realization of it. We have here

A STATE OF IGNORANCE IMPLIED. We are by nature ignorant of God,

In the perfections of his nature. These are displayed in his manifold works; but the unbeliever discerns not the traces of a Divine hand in them. He has no just views and conceptions of the being and attributes of the Deity.

In the salvation of his Son. The ungodly cannot estimate the value of his atonement, the all-sufficiency of his grace, and the extent of the privileges he has to bestow. Having never seen themselves in their vileness, they know nothing of Christ in his preciousness.

In the operations of his Spirit. This was the case with Nicodemus; when our Lord talked to him of the amazing change produced in the soul by the Spirit's power and grace, he exclaimed, "How can these things be?"

In the excellency of his word. What a rich treasury have we here! It is full of glorious and important truths; but the man who is ignorant of God has not the key that unlocks it. The natural man discerns not the beauties, neither does he appreciate the worth, of Scripture.

A STATE OF KNOWLEDGE INSURED. "And thou shalt know the Lord." Contemplate

The glory of its object. "The Lord." It includes an acquaintance with the blessed Trinity, God as a Father, Christ as a Redeemer, and the Spirit as a Sanctifier; and all three adorable Persons engaged in covenant for our salvation.

The excellency of its nature. It surpasses all other knowledge in every point of view. It is spiritual, experimental, and personal. *Thou* shalt know the Lord.

The value of its effects. It will humble us before God, and this self-abasement will increase as our knowledge becomes more extensive; it will impart pleasure and satisfaction to the mind. We read of the savor of this knowledge; it will lead us to cultivate spirituality of mind, and a love of holiness, and to fill up our several stations in life according to the rules of God's word, and the dictates of an enlightened conscience. Let me, therefore, seek it, and esteem all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.

June 25.

THE IMPORTANT SEARCH.

"Your heart shall live, that seek God."—Psalm lxix. 32.

The Psalm before us was doubtless penned by David in a season of sore affliction. We have in it a statement of his trying case, and the assurance he felt that God would hear and deliver him. The words selected as the subject of our meditation, hold out to us abundant encouragement to wait upon God and keep his way. Observe

What is required of us in a way of duty. To seek God. This implies that we have lost him; by sin we have lost his presence, his likeness, his friendship, and his favor. We cannot be happy till we have found him.

Its object. "God." It is the mark of a wicked man, that he does not inquire after God, nor feel desirous of seeking him; but it is the evidence of a Christian, that he seeks God. This is the noblest pursuit in which we can possibly engage. We must seek an experimental knowledge of him, a firmer reliance on him, nearer communion with him, and greater devotedness to him; his favor, his pardon, his grace, and his guidance. Are not these worth possessing?

Its scenes. Where is he to be sought? He has not left us in ignorance respecting this matter. We must seek him in Christ, as the way; with the word as our rule, the Spirit as our guide, and glory as our end. He is not far from us in nature and in providence, but in the word he is very near unto us. Seek him in the oracles of truth; here he is set forth clearly and fully. Seek him in his house; here he is exhibited in all the grandeur of his majesty, the depth of his condescension, the loveliness of his character, the plenitude of his grace, and the nature of his requirements. Seek him at the mercy-seat; here he sits to commune with you; the Spirit is ready to help your infirmities, and Jesus bids you welcome. Seek him at all times, you can never come out of season.

Its manner. The coldness of formality should never be united with the warmth of devotion. The fire in the temple of our hearts must never go out; but there will be great danger of its burning very dimly, unless we stir it up in the cultivation of a spiritual and devotional frame. God must be sought with

our whole heart; all its powers and passions must be employed; we must seek him simply in his own way, and dependently, on his own strength.

June 26.

THE COMPREHENSIVE BLESSING.

"Your heart shall live, that seek God."—Psalm lxix. 32.

There is much in this psalm that applies to Christ in his sufferings; so that, while we maintain the literal, we must not lose sight of the typical sense of its contents. This passage is short, but full of interesting matter. Observe

What is insured to us by way of privilege. Many separate blessings are promised to those who seek God; but the expression in our text seems to include them all. It is similar to that promise in Isa. lv. 3, "Hear, and your soul shall live."

It is spiritual. Its seat is in the heart, and this is the seat of all true religion. If our religion is all in the head and understanding, it has not done us much good; to benefit us, it must be in the heart, and connected with the experience. Your names may live among men by a profession of religion, while your hearts are not alive to God in the possession of it.

It is comprehensive. It includes everything that pertains to life and godliness: "Whoso findeth me, findeth life." Your heart shall live in God's favor, and beneath his smiles; in sweet communion with him, and delightful enjoyment of him. It involves soul prosperity, progress in grace, and increase in holiness. Your heart shall live, supported by him in trial, strengthened by him in duty, and animated by him in the prospect of dissolution.

It is certain. "Your heart *shall* live." You shall realize it; for God has promised it in his word, secured it in his covenant, and has in every age fulfilled it in the happy experience of his people. How lamentable is it, that there are so few who feel a desire to seek God! The glittering toys of this world are eagerly pursued; while the field, where lies hidden the pearl of great price, is passed by with indifference, if not looked at with scorn and contempt. King Henry IV. asked a distin-

guished individual if he had observed the great eclipse of the sun which had lately happened; to which he replied, "I have so much to do on earth that I have no time to look up to heaven." Will not this apply to those whose minds are so absorbed with the objects of time that they seldom give eternity a thought? Oh! seek the Lord while he may be found!

June 27.

SINGING IN GOD'S WAYS.

"They shall sing in the ways of the Lord."—Psalm cxxxviii. 5.

This passage furnishes us with two very interesting subjects connected with believers.

The course they pursue. "The ways of the Lord." Observe

The properties that belong to them. They are peculiar ways. Thus they differ from all others; those who walk in them are a peculiar people; others take knowledge of them, and they are as men wondered at. They are right ways, all others are wrong. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." They are honorable ways, they are associated with honor, and they lead to honor; those who walk in them shall be made kings and priests unto God. They are diversified ways. Here there is much to be done, suffered, and enjoyed. They are ways of confidence in God and love to him; ways of duty, trial, sacrifice, and self-denial. They are tried ways. What millions have tried them, and all have been perfectly satisfied with them! These are the good old paths in which believers delight to walk.

The terms by which they are distinguished. They are emphatically called "the ways *of the Lord*." But why? Because he reveals them. He has marked them out for us in legible characters in his word. Because they connect us with him. They concern him, bring us near to him; in them we view him, walk with him, trust in him, and lean upon him. Because he puts us in them. By nature we pursue a contrary course, grace turns our feet into the way of peace. Because they lead us finally to him in glory. We begin with the cross, and end with

the crown, commence weeping, and terminate rejoicing; but all the joy is not at the end—"they shall sing in the ways of the Lord."

THE FEELING THEY EVINCE. They sing, but do they not sometimes sigh? Yes, there is a mixture of joy and sorrow.

They shall sing for gratitude. Christians cannot be too frequently employed in the heavenly exercise of praise, yet how often are their hearts and their harps out of tune! Sing ye the praises of that God who has not only given you the breath of natural life, but the principle of spiritual being.

They shall sing for joy. They rejoice that at length they have found the way to glory, and are walking in it. Such a cheerful and happy feeling of mind will invite the notice of all around, and those who have joined in the shouts of unhallowed mirth will desire to learn the songs of Zion.

June 28.

GOD'S PEOPLE.

"The people of God."—1 Pet. ii. 10.

WHAT a contrast there is between the past and present state of believers! They were enveloped in the darkness of ignorance, but are now irradiated with the light of knowledge; they were at a distance from God, but are now brought near to him; they were as sheep going astray, but are now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of souls; they were not a people, but are now the people of God.

THEY ARE A CHOSEN PEOPLE. Chosen in Christ from eternity, according to the sovereign will of God; chosen to the greatest honors, and the highest distinctions. They are vessels of mercy, fitted and prepared for the Master's use. "Even so, Father; for so it seemeth good in thy sight."

THEY ARE A HOLY PEOPLE. We must never separate the fact of the Divine choice from the sanctifying effects. Holiness is to be the believer's aim, his end, and his desire. It is not the creed that makes the Christian; your views of truth may be orthodox, while your life is not so.

THEY ARE A PECULIAR PEOPLE. They are so in various

ways. In their origin, for they are born from above; in their principles, these are spiritual; in their habits, they dare to be singular; in their pursuits, they tread in a peculiar track, and aim to discern the footsteps of the flock, and above all, the marks of the Shepherd's feet. In their pleasures, prospects, and eternal destination, they are peculiar.

THEY ARE A TRIED PEOPLE. The present life is one of probation; the future, of retribution. God tries his people in their graces; faith, hope, love, meekness, and all the other graces that adorn the Christian character. He tries their principles, views, feelings, and experience, to see if they will stand the test.

THEY ARE A HAPPY PEOPLE. They have everything to make them so. If they have the floods of tribulation to toss them, they have the anchor of hope to steady them; if they have the prickling thorns and briers of the wilderness, they have the fragrant rose of Sharon and the beautiful lily of the valley; if they have painful seasons of trial and gloom, they have the pleasing promise, "At evening time it shall be light."

THEY ARE AN INCREASING PEOPLE. There were only eight in the ark; ten righteous persons would have saved Sodom; but how greatly has the number increased! How many means are in operation for this great end. Let us pray that other sheep may be brought into the fold of Christ, more children adopted into his family, and multitudes of subjects yet people his empire. May our desire be to be found in their number!

June 29.

THE DISCOURAGEMENTS OF THE WAY.

"And the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way."—Numb. xxi. 4.

THE journey of the Israelites in the wilderness must be viewed, not merely as an historical fact, but a lively type of the Christian's course. Let me introduce to your notice a Christian pilgrim who is discouraged because of the way.

LET US HEAR HIS COMPLAINTS. He is discouraged because of

The enemies of the way. The Israelites had not only to

contend with openly avowed adversaries, but secret foes; and so has the believer. He is engaged in contest with no ordinary enemies. Earth and hell unite to oppose him in his heavenly march.

The roughness of the way. He is journeying in a wilderness where there are many privations to be endured, and many difficulties to be encountered. It is far from being a smooth path; and there are periods in his experience when because of these things his soul is discouraged.

The intricacy of the way. This was peculiarly applicable to the Israelites; theirs was far from being a straight course. So now, God leads his people about; they have a chart of the land through which they are travelling, but cannot always trace the road, or understand the way.

The misunderstandings of the way. How needful for us is the advice which Joseph gave to his brethren, "See that ye fall not out of the way!" As partakers of the same Divine nature, interested in the same covenant, and cherishing the same hopes, let us endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

The length of the way. The children of Israel were forty years journeying what they might have accomplished in a few days. The promise is to be received after we have done the will of God. Having alluded to the Christian pilgrim's complaints,

LET US SHOW HIM HIS COMFORTS. Is your soul discouraged because of the way? think of these three things—

The examples afforded you. Yours is not a singular case, you suffer in honorable company; the prophets, the noble army of martyrs, the glorious band of reformers and confessors, have trodden the same path; and Jesus himself has left the marks of his footsteps. Why should you be discouraged?

The supplies granted you. God spreads a table for you in the wilderness; the pillar of cloud and fire is before you; and streams from the rock Christ follow you, so that you may sing the Lord's song in a strange land, and rejoice in the house of your pilgrimage.

The glory set before you. Think of the promised crown, and you will cheerfully take up the cross; contemplate the glory that awaits you, and you will welcome reproach, and encourage yourself in the Lord your God.

June 30.

BEING IN THE GARDEN WITH CHRIST.

"Did not I see thee in the garden with him?"—John xviii. 26.

These words were addressed to Peter on a most affecting occasion; when, denying his Lord and Master, he was recognized by one of the servants of the high priest. There are many senses in which we shall find it both pleasant and profitable to be in the garden with Christ.

In the exercise of sacred meditation. Oh! what have we to contemplate here! What a scene of suffering, when, being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground! Let the golden thread of prayer run through the web of meditation.

With the eye of unfeigned faith. Behold the Man! Do you not see Divinity enshrined in that agonized body? the likeness of the Son of God in that countenance that is more marred than any man's? Do you not perceive some rays of glory emanating from his grief-worn human form? The Sun of Righteousness is about to set in darkness; can you not discern beams of brightness gilding the clouds that are soon to shut the glories in?

With the tear of genuine repentance. By meditation, we walk in the garden; faith sees the Saviour, and believes in the efficacy of his atonement; repentance stands weeping behind him, and cries, Oh, the exceeding sinfulness of sin! It was said of Mary, "She goeth unto the grave to weep there." Let this be said of you in reference to the garden of Gethsemane.

With the expression of grateful acknowledgment. While we should mourn for sin as the cause, we should rejoice in salvation as the glorious result of the Saviour's sufferings. Through death he has spoiled principalities and powers, finished transgression, and wrought out righteousness; so that now, to the believer, sin has lost its dominion—the law its condemning power—death its sting—the grave its victory—and hell its terror.

With a desire after close communion. In proportion to the nearness of our intercourse with him will be our disrelish

for the world's pleasures, and desire after spiritual enjoyment: and when the inquiry is made with respect to us, "Did I not see thee in the garden with him?" we shall rejoice to acknowledge the fact.

With a resolution of entire devotedness. Our whole life in this world should be the continual presentation of a living sacrifice to him. Such an exercise will ennoble the mind, exalt the feelings, and rejoice the spirit. Amid the beauty, richness, and fragrance of the flowers of the garden, let me be with Him whose excellences are so often set forth by an allusion to these curious works of his fingers: let me see him in the rose, the lily, the apple-tree, and the trees of the wood; and long for the time when I shall be in the garden of the heavenly paradise with him.

July 1.

THE SECURITY OF THE CHRISTIAN'S JOY.

"Your joy no man taketh from you."—John xvi. 22.

Three things may be here noticed, with regard to the Christian's joy.

Its nature. How shall we describe it? The source from whence it flows is pure and holy. God the Father is the object of this joy, Christ is its medium, and the Spirit its promoter. Believers rejoice in the perfections of the Divine Being. His unerring wisdom is their guide, his almighty power their guard, his holiness promotes their sanctification, his justice avenges their wrongs, his faithfulness is their shield and buckler, his infinity is the extent of their inheritance, his eternity the date of their happiness, and his immutability the rock of their rest. They rejoice in things pertaining to God; in the Gospel, because it brings life and immortality to light; in doctrines and precepts, as the rule of their faith and practice; in the promises, as the ground of their encouragement and hope; and in divine ordinances, as promoting their holiness and happiness.

Its excellency. Consider some of its properties.

It is real. The pleasures and delights of the world are only a delusion, but there is a solid reality in the Christian's joy.

Was Moses deluded, when he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season? Was David deluded, when he rejoiced in God as his rock, his tower, and his strong defence? Was Paul deluded when he triumphed in the cross of Christ?

It is spiritual. It is so in its nature, source, tendency, and effects. It arises from the possession of a spiritual principle, and is cherished by the contemplation of spiritual objects.

It is hidden. The world knoweth us not. Believers are designated God's "hidden ones." God, the object of their joy, dwells in invisible brightness; like the grace of hope, it enters into that within the veil.

Its security. "Your joy no man taketh from you." Temporal losses cannot deprive the Christian of his treasure: it is said of the believing Hebrews that they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods. Tribulation cannot, for they "rejoice in tribulation." Death, so far from injuring, will perfect this joy. Passing by the world's delusions, let us seek that joy which is not like the yielding sand or bursting bubble; but which resembles the rock, defying the raging tempests, and the lashing waves; and which shall flourish in the Christian's breast, when rocks and hills have passed away in the world's last convulsion, and nature itself shall sink in ruins.

July 2.

JOY IN HOPE.

"Rejoicing in hope."—Rom. xii. 12.

The Christian is commanded to rejoice in the present good which grace communicates, and in the future bliss it insures. Contemplate

The hope he possesses. It may be regarded in

Its object. We hope in God as a God in Christ, and a God in covenant. How unworthy of an immortal mind are those things on which the worldling's hopes are fixed! They will not, for a moment, bear a comparison with the sublime and glorious object to which the Christian aspires.

Its ground. Christ is emphatically called "our hope." All

the bright anticipations that are cherished by the Christian are derived from a believing view of the efficacious death and atoning sacrifice of Jesus. The clouds of terror and despair encompass the distressed soul, till it arrives on Calvary's holy mount, where the atmosphere is clear, and the firmament is bright.

Its nature. It is a believing expectation of something promised, as yet unseen; and it is intimately connected with faith and patience. Faith sees the object, and believes it is for her; patience waits, and hope expects. We hope for guidance in the way, and glory in the end.

Its effects. It imparts peace and tranquillity to the mind, amidst all the changes and vicissitudes of life; cheers the fainting spirit; and leads its possessor to the cultivation of holy tempers and dispositions; "for every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Its rays illumine the valley of death, and are overpowered in the full blaze of immortal glory.

THE JOY IT INSPIRES. "Rejoicing in hope." There is joy, both in its exercise and realization.

The seasons when we rejoice in hope. When temptations are strong, we rejoice in the hope of sustaining grace. Dwell not so much on the heat of the furnace, as the beauty of the gold that it refines. When afflictions are heavy, we rejoice in hope of deliverance. The beams of hope can pierce the darkest cloud of trial, and gild it with celestial brightness. When doubts are thick, we rejoice in hope of their dispersion. Baxter compares doubts to a thistle—a bad weed growing in good ground. The most eminent saints have had their fears and misgivings; and the late Mr. Romaine, being once asked whether he ever doubted, said, "Do I ever breathe?" When death advances, we rejoice in hope of victory. "The righteous hath hope in his death."

The reasons why we should rejoice in hope. Because such a state of mind will tend to the glory of God, be a witness to the value of religion, and contribute to our own personal enjoyment. Let us, therefore, seek a good hope through grace; one that will not evaporate in the cold atmosphere of death, but burst forth in the full realizations of immortality.

Hope shall change to glad fruition,
Faith to sight, and prayer to praise.

July 3.

THE UNIVERSAL REIGN OF CHRIST.

"All nations shall serve him."—Psalm lxxii. 11.

This is spoken of Christ. How unlikely, humanly speaking, would this appear, if we refer to many things connected with his advent in this world! Look at his birth, the meanness and poverty of his condition, his companions, twelve poor illiterate fishermen, and the design of his mission. He came to establish not earthly monarchy, but expressly declared, "My kingdom is not of this world." He came to introduce a religion which was directly opposed to the spirit of the world, and the carnal desires and inclinations of man; a religion that should overturn all the false notions and systems which had so long obtained, in which the ancient and learned philosophers boasted and prided themselves. But "God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are his ways our ways." Notice here

The extent of the promise. It includes

The universal diffusion of truth. Ere this promise is completely fulfilled, error shall disappear, and truth shall triumphantly prevail. The souls of the heathen are like incrusted diamonds, whose light and beauty are only discovered on the removal of the incrustation by the polishing influence of the Gospel of Christ; then they rise in all their splendor, lighted up by drinking in the beams of an orient sun.

The complete destruction of his enemies. How many things are there that unite to oppose the march of our glorious Immanuel! There is infidelity, that has received so much countenance in this deluded age, which would rob us of the only foundation of our hope, deprive us of all comfort in life, and blast our brightest prospects for eternity. The time is coming when it shall be overturned, and all its adherents compelled to believe what once they denied. Heathen lands shall have the light of life. The spell of superstition, by which so many myriads have been bound, shall be broken. "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet."

The glorious triumph of his kingdom. It is not established on worldly principles, or sustained by worldly power; it shall be built up forever. All the nations, now rude and uncivilized,

shall pay their tribute to this Almighty King. May I, bowing before him, and rendering him the homage of the heart, crown him Lord of all.

July 4.

THE MEANS AND CERTAINTY OF THE SAVIOUR'S DOMINION.

"All nations shall serve him."—Psalm lxxii. 11.

Yes, every tribe shall lay a laurel at the stem of Jesse, and every tongue shall celebrate his praise. In this passage we have a glorious promise. Let us look at

The means of its accomplishment. Is it to be effected by the wielding of warlike weapons, compelling the enemies of Christ to surrender or be killed with the sword? O no; these triumphs are won not with the battle-axe, but with the hammer of the Word; not with the sword of the magistrate, but with the sword of the Spirit. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal," but spiritual.

By the preaching of the Word. This is the instrumental cause. There must be the dispensation of the word of truth, in all its fulness, its excellences, and its blessed results. The cross of Christ must be erected, and the banners of that cross must be unfurled, if sinners are savingly converted to God.

By the power of the Spirit. This is the efficient cause. The dreariness, desolation, and barrenness of the moral desert will never assume the beauty, fragrance, and fruitfulness of the garden of the Lord, without the genial and enlivening beams of the Sun of righteousness, the showers of Divine grace, and the dew of the Spirit's influences.

The certainty of its fulfilment. This may be argued from

The statements of Scripture. See Psalm ii. 8, 9; xxii. 27–31. Though many of the nations are now fettered with idolatry, deluded with error, sunk in ignorance, and darkened by superstition, they shall be brought under the yoke of our glorious Immanuel; and so the declaration shall be fulfilled, "All nations shall serve him." *The death and intercession of Christ.*

The efficacy of the one, and the prevalency of the other, fully secure it. *The progress the Gospel has already made.* Look at our missionary records;—impediments and hindrances are being removed, the Gospel is gaining free course, and God is giving testimony to the word of his grace. We anticipate with joy the period when all the laborers shall be called home, and the glorious work shall be finished, and the text shall receive its full and final accomplishment:—"All nations shall serve him."

"Great King of grace! my heart subdue:
I would be led in triumph too,
A willing captive to my Lord,
And sing the victories of his word."

July 5.

GOD PRESENT IN THE SANCTUARY.

"Surely the Lord is in this place."—Gen. xxxviii. 16.

JACOB was a plain man, dwelling in tents; and on his arrival at Bethel, he had a very plain accommodation; his chamber was the open air, his canopy the heavens, his bed the earth, his pillow some stones;—but his sleep was sweet. "And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place." We may apply this to our religious assemblies. Where he has recorded his name, he will give his presence.

HE HAS PROMISED IT; Exod. xx. 24. It is his presence that stamps a dignity on the place, gives a value to Divine ordinances, raises our expectations, cheers our souls, and rejoices our hearts. We delight to dwell in his house, because it is the place of his residence. "Surely the Lord is in this place."

AS THE HEARER OF PRAYER. He who listens to the harmonious notes of angels, deigns to hear a sinner's cry. He communes with us from the mercy-seat; Exod. xxv. 22. Let us therefore spread our case before the Lord, and depend on the mercy, skill, and wisdom of our great Advocate. "Surely the Lord is in this place."

ADDRESSING US IN HIS WORD. Thus there is a communication carried on between God and man; while we address him in prayer, he speaks to us in his Word. Ministers are but the echo of his voice; say not, therefore, I will go and hear such and such an individual; but, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak." "Surely the Lord is in this place."

DISPENSING HIS CHOICEST FAVORS. In the sanctuary, the sinner brings his wants, and God displays his fulness in the supply of them. He bestows blessings in countless numbers, astonishing variety, and inestimable value. Here he is known as the sinner's friend, and the saint's support. "Surely the Lord is in this place;" and

WE SHOULD ESTEEM IT A PRIVILEGE TO BE HERE. We should visit the sanctuary, not only from a conviction of duty, but from a principle of love. The Christian loves the house of God, because he loves the God of the house; because his mind is instructed, his spirit revived, his burden lightened there. He delights to be where God is, for God is the home of his soul. "Surely the Lord is in this place,"

BUT THERE IS DANGER OF OUR FORGETTING IT. "I knew it not," says Jacob. Do you always remember it? If you did, would there be such cold indifference, such wandering thoughts, such unhallowed desires? Remember the God of Jacob is here. Remember it in every part of the service; when you sing, think of it, and praise him with the heart; when you enter, think of it, and pray for a blessing; when you surround the throne of grace, think of it, and pour out your spirit; when you listen to his Word, think of it, and take heed how you hear.

July 6.

THE PERSONAL AND RELATIVE ADVANTAGES OF RELIGION.

"So will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing."—Zech. i. 7, 13.

THESE words were spoken of ancient Israel; but they will apply to every Israelite indeed. We have in them the personal advantage and relative benefit of religion.

ITS PERSONAL ADVANTAGE. "So will I save you." Salva-

tion is the grand theme of the Bible, the burden of heaven's anthems, and the joy of the penitent's heart.

Its nature. It includes in it everything desirable; a deliverance from evil, and the enjoyment of good. It is associated with present pleasures, and shall be crowned with eternal happiness.

Its subjects. "You." Who? Men, and not angels. "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Sinners, rebels; those who are exposed to danger, and in a state of spiritual death.

Its Author. "I will save you." Every blessing must be traced up to him who is the Father of lights, and the Author of every good and perfect gift. Salvation is of the Lord. It is the fruit of the Father's love, the Son's purchase, and the Spirit's grace.

ITS RELATIVE BENEFIT. "And ye shall be a blessing." What a contrast to their former state! "Ye were a curse," and this will apply to those who are in an unconverted state. God imparts the light of grace, that believers may shine—gives the salt of grace, that they may bear a savor of religion—plants the trees of grace, that they may bear fruit; and blesses them, that they may be a blessing to others. So they are designated "the excellent of the earth." But in what respects are they a blessing?

By their holy example. It was a good saying of one of the heathen philosophers, "Talk not of a good life, let your life speak." There is an impressive and commanding eloquence in this silent voice.

By their active exertions. We should endeavor to relieve the temporal wants of the needy, and thus obtain the blessing of those who are ready to perish. But above all, let us seek their spiritual good, and so be a blessing in the instruction of the ignorant, the warning of the careless, the reclaiming of the wanderer, and the conversion of sinners to God.

By their fervent prayers. There is many a humble, secluded Christian, who is made an extensive blessing by his importunate supplications. "The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Let me inquire how I stand in society—Am I a blessing or a curse? for none of us liveth to himself.

July 7.

THE DAY OF ETERNITY.

"The day is at hand."—Rom. xiii. 12.

The revolutions of time shall soon be lost in the ages of eternity; the dark veil which now shrouds futurity shall soon be drawn aside; Jordan's streams shall soon be crossed, and the believer shall be surrounded by purity and never-ending peace; "the night is far spent, the day is at hand." Consider

The brilliancy and grandeur of the day. If this world to the Christian is night, heaven shall be to him a day. Let us notice several things respecting it.

It is a day of rest and peace. Peace marks every object there. If there is an ocean there, it is never disturbed by the ruffle of a wave. If there is a firmament there, it is never darkened by the appearance of a cloud, and knows not the destruction of a storm. If there are harps there, all are tuned to Jehovah's praise, and there is not a jarring sound to spoil the harmony. If there is a sun there, it never goes down. There every inhabitant is animated by the same spirit, a subject of the same emotions, consecrated to the same object, employed in the same contemplations, and swelling the same song.

It is a day of enjoyment and triumph. What is heaven? It is the realization of this hope: "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness." There is the full, free, and uninterrupted enjoyment of communion with God, and fellowship with angels and the spirits of the redeemed.

It is an eternal day. Its brilliancy shall never be diminished, its employments shall never close. There is an assembly which no devastation can dissolve, and enjoyments which ever-rolling ages shall only enhance. Consider the approach of this day. It is "at hand"—the tale of life will soon be told. Death will soon visit us, and the grave will soon receive us. Already, Christian, we may imagine the beams of the morning stretching forth, and the shadows of the night declining. Even now we are on the borders of the unseen world, standing on the threshold of eternity, and some of us may be near the brink of that river into which we must soon launch. How many tremble like the last leaves of autumn, only waiting for the gentle

breeze to blow them away, and cause them to disappear! The righteous are ready whenever the summons comes; but the ungodly stand as upon a shelf, undermined by every wave borne in upon it by the tide of time; and if the last shock be given, before they are reconciled to God, they will be ingulfed in ruin.

July 8.

THE GROWING TRIUMPHS OF CHRIST.

"His enemies will I clothe with shame; but upon himself shall his crown flourish."
Psalm cxxxii. 18.

In this psalm we have encouraging promises respecting the growing increase and final triumphs of Christ's kingdom. Here is

An awful fact implied. Christ has enemies. Who are they? Devils,—but this is not all; men, and yet he is the friend of sinners. His enemies may be arranged under three classes:—The daring infidel. He strikes at the very root of Christ's kingdom, longs for its downfall, and tries by every possible means to diffuse his poisonous principles. The open profligate. He makes light of all the invitations of mercy, and all the exhibitions of Divine love, and is not ashamed openly to avow his hostile principles. The inconsistent professor. How many such characters have there been in every age! Paul complains of them, Phil. iii. 18: they crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. They are enemies under the disguise of friends.

An alarming punishment threatened. They shall be clothed with shame. This threatening is partially executed here, but fully hereafter. They shall be clothed with shame at death. How confused shall they be to find all their plots and schemes frustrated by him who takes the wise in their own craftiness! What shame shall cover them when the disembodied spirit shall be summoned to appear before God! They shall be clothed with shame in the judgment. How ashamed shall they be when they see the righteous, whom they have despised, fully vindicated and acquitted, and themselves condemned! They shall be clothed with everlasting shame. To this Daniel alludes,

chap. xii. 2, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

A GLORIOUS PROMISE MADE. "But upon himself shall his crown flourish." This implies—complete victory. "His crown;" the indication of his conquest over his foes. It is said, "On his head were many crowns," alluding to the number and extent of his triumphs. High honor. A crown is an emblem, not only of victory, but of honor and dignity. Growing triumphs. The crown shall flourish on his head. He goes forth conquering and to conquer. It shall be so till the allegiance is universal; he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. Am I a subject of King Jesus? I give him the service of the lip, but do I pay him the homage of the heart? Let me not be found among his enemies, but numbered with his friends.

July 9.

THE HAPPINESS OF THOSE THAT FEAR GOD.

"Yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God."—Eccles. viii. 12.

How long does God suspend his threatened judgments on the wicked! It is well when his goodness leads to repentance; but how many abuse it! "Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God."

THE CHARACTER. "Them that fear God." Believers are described by their faith, love, spirit, motives, and pursuits; but here, by their fear. This principle is

Comprehensive. It includes the whole of religion. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and we are to perfect holiness in it. This fear is mingled with love.

Implanted. It is not natural to us. "I will put my fear in their hearts," says God. They fear "before him;" this shows the sincerity of the principle.

Active. It will operate, and at all times. We shall not only fear God in a thunder-storm, but in a calm; it will influence us in reference to our thoughts, desires, duties, and trials.

THE ENCOURAGEMENT. "It shall be well with them." This

includes everything for their good, both in time and eternity. Especially

The peculiar care of Providence. God performs all things for them; their wants never escape his notice; he sweetens their comforts, soothes their sorrows, preserves their lives.

The rich provisions of grace. They are interested in the everlasting covenant. Is it not well with them? They enjoy communion with God, peace of conscience, all spiritual blessings in Christ.

Admittance into glory. This crowns all. It shall be well both with the body and the soul. The poor, vile body shall be changed, and rendered glorious; and the powers and capacities of the soul shall be wonderfully improved.

THE CERTAINTY. "Yet surely I know." The fact is confirmed by the testimony of God's word. "Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with them." By the tenor of his covenant he has guaranteed this, and will not forfeit his solemn engagments. By the experience of his people. Christian, can you adopt these words? Let me remember that it cannot be well with me if I do not fear God; and let me pray, Lord, put thy fear into my heart.

July 10.

THE NIGHT OF TIME.

"The night is far spent."—Rom. xiii. 12.

PERSONAL piety is of unspeakable advantage to its possessor in every situation in life. It leads our contemplations to the joys and triumphs of heaven, and tells us that this is only the embryo state of our existence, that "the night is far spent and the day is at hand." Here is a pleasing contrast between the night of time, and the day of eternity. Let us consider

THE DARKNESS AND DREARINESS OF THE NIGHT. There is a beautiful correspondence between the state of night and the character of our world. The world is to the Christian

A night of ignorance. How limited is the knowledge of the most eminent believer in this world! What mysteries veil the dispensations of God's providence! Clouds and darkness are

round about him. He moves in the whirlwind, and rides upon the storm; his way is in the sea. Do not his dealings with us sometimes constitute an abyss, in which our minds are overwhelmed, and our thoughts drowned? Are there not truths in the Bible which far exceed the grasp of our comprehension, and transcend the loftiest conceptions of our minds. It is yet night with us.

A night of imperfection. Imperfection will cleave to the believer till the day of eternity dawns. As our knowledge is imperfect, so are our graces; our faith, love, joy, hope, and desires. The work of the Spirit in our hearts is only in progress, much more remains to be done. Concerning everything connected with the Christian's character, life, and experience, it may be said, it is "in part." Our joys, our consolations, and our communion with God, are yet imperfect.

A night of sorrow. The world is a sea of trouble, where one wave rolls incessantly on another. Let us be thankful that it is not an endless night. "The night is far spent;" very far with some. "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." But how has it been spent? Too often in murmuring rather than in praising. Let the Christian be thankful it is not total night with him. There are some glimmerings of light, some bright rays that foretell the dawning of the day. Let us, therefore, spend the remainder of the night in a manner that becomes us, as the expectants of a glorious immortality.

July 11.

THE VALUE OF THE SOUL.

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"—Matt. xvi. 26.

THE "fashion of this world passeth away." There is a period fast approaching when all nature shall sink in ruins. The sun, the glorious luminary of day, shall be eclipsed forever: the moon in her beauty, and the stars in their brightness, shall cease to shine. The hills, which seem to sustain the heavens, and are styled "everlasting," shall flow down like melted wax at the decree of Him who laid their foundations so deep, and raised

their heads so high. Why should we repose our confidence on that which is so transitory, uncertain, and short-lived? We have here

An important truth implied. The value of the soul. In what does this appear?

From its natural excellences. The soul is possessed of natural excellences, which it cannot be deprived of without losing its existence. It is a *living* and *moving* essence, and so excels corporeal matter, which has neither life, sense, nor motion, of itself. Look at the origin of the soul, it is the very breath of God. Gen. ii. 7. It is a *spiritual* essence, which cannot be seen or felt, and so excels the body, which is formed out of dust. The soul is *immortal*, and is consequently more excellent than the body, which is subject to dissolution.

From the curious texture of the body wherein it dwells. The body, though formed out of the dust, bears the most evident marks of Divine power and wisdom. "I am fearfully and wonderfully made," says David. If the cabinet is so exquisitely wrought, how excellent must the precious jewel be that is lodged in it! What a pity that this sparkling diamond, set in a ring of such beautiful workmanship, should be so defaced by sin!

From the price paid for its redemption. We generally form our estimate of the value of things by the price paid for them; if we apply this to the soul, its excellence must be far beyond our comprehension. "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." For souls the Son of God became incarnate, suffered, bled, and died.

> Truth is immortal as thy soul; and fable
> As fleeting as thy joys. Be wise, nor make
> Heaven's highest blessing, Vengeance; O, be wise!
> Nor make a curse of immortality.
> Say, know'st thou what it is, or what thou art?
> "Know'st thou the importance of a soul immortal?
> Behold the midnight glory, worlds on worlds!
> Amazing pomp! Redouble this amaze,
> Ten thousand add, and twice ten thousand more,
> Then weigh the whole; one soul outweighs them all,
> And calls the astonishing magnificence
> Of unintelligent creation poor."

July 12.

THE UNPROFITABLE BARGAIN.

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"—Matt. xvi. 26.

How valuable does the soul appear when we contemplate its origin, nature, capacities, and immortal destinies! yet how few ponder the words of the Saviour in the passage before us! We have here

A SOLEMN INQUIRY MADE. "What is a man," &c.

If a man had gained the whole world, he could not enjoy it. Let us suppose an individual having made this conquest. It might perhaps afford him some imaginary pleasure to survey in his own mind how much he possessed; but he could not even behold it with his eyes any other way than in a map, which others may do as well as himself: but as to real benefit, he could enjoy but a very small part of it.

He would not be content with it. "All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full." The pleasures of this world consist more in hope than enjoyment; so that if an individual possessed the whole world, one of the chief pleasures of life would be gone; there would be nothing more left for which to hope. He must be a miserable man, whose desires are not satisfied, while his hopes are at an end; so that if a man could conquer the whole world, as Alexander thought he had done, when that engagement was accomplished, he would do as Alexander did, sit down and weep because there was not another world to conquer.

It would be a curse to him, without the grace of God. "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them." How a small portion of the mammon of this world, in the hands of the graceless, drowns them in everlasting perdition and irremediable ruin! How pernicious, then, would the whole of it be to such characters!

He would have no certainty of keeping it. The supposition of gaining the whole world plainly implies that it is lost to those who had it before. When Alexander conquered Darius, and seized his kingdom, just as much as Alexander gained Darius lost; so that if a man could gain the whole world, this very circumstance would clearly show to him the uncertain

hold he had of it. How transitory and evanescent are all things beneath the skies!

"The spider's most attenuated thread
Is cord, is cable, to man's tender tie
On earthly bliss—it breaks at every breeze."

It would afford him no consolation in death. Could it calm and tranquillize the mind in the prospect of eternity? Would it not rather plant thorns on our dying pillow? Remember, if the soul is lost, all is lost—the favor of God, the salvation of Christ, the consolation of the Spirit. Commit your soul, therefore, to Him who is willing to redeem it by his grace, and make it a possessor of his glory.

July 13.

THE TRUE LIGHT.

"That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." John i. 9.

The sacred writers have borrowed various images from nature, in order to set forth the transcendent excellences and unrivalled glories of Christ. He is called the tree of life, the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valley, the Sun of righteousness, the bright and morning star, and the light of the world. Let us notice

The title given to Christ. "The true Light." He is so called in opposition to

The false light of heathen philosophy. That cannot be a true light which gives its possessor no clear views and perceptions of the Deity, opens no resource in the time of trouble, gives no sense of pardon and acceptance with God, and reveals nothing of the glories of immortality. "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" Christ is called "the true Light" in opposition to

The typical light of the old economy. The law presents us with the pattern of things in the heavens, but the Gospel contains the very things themselves. How faintly the light was seen in the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Jews! but how brightly it shone when the Son of God was manifest in the

flesh! It shone in the manger—it shone in the cities of Judah—it shone on the mount of transfiguration—it shone on the cross—and it now shines both in heaven and on earth. The Saviour is designated "the true Light" in opposition to

The borrowed light of ordinary ministers. They are often represented as lights in a dark world. John was a burning and a shining light. All the light which inspired apostles possessed, and which the ambassadors of the Gospel now have, is derived from him.

The blessings he diffuses. "Which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Observe here two things.

The fact. The Saviour imparts light—the light of reason. All its powers, capacities, and discoveries, are from him. The light of revelation. The rays of Divine truth emanate from Him who is the fountain of light. Christ is the author, substance, and glory of the Gospel. The light of grace. Man by nature is in an awful state of darkness, and will remain so, till Christ the Sun of righteousness arises on the benighted mind, and sheds abroad his heavenly beams.

The universality of it. "Which lighteth every man." We must not take this literally. It intimates the general diffusion of this blessing of light—that it is imparted to men of all climes and kindreds, ranks and conditions. We should be thankful for the light of reason—more so for the light of revelation—still more for the light of grace—and most of all for the light of glory.

July 14.

THE BENEFIT OF SANCTIFIED AFFLICTION.

"Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept thy word."—Psalm cxix. 67.

This is the testimony of David, and it is the experience of many a Christian; such a similarity is there in the sentiments, views, experience, and feelings of the children of God. David here

Admits a painful truth. "Before I was afflicted, I went astray." The character of sin is a going astray, and sinners are

wanderers: the subjects of grace are sometimes wanderers too. David confesses it,—"I have gone astray like a lost sheep." Whence does this liability to err, even in the best of men, arise?

From the vigilance of the enemy. He is ever on the alert, whether we sleep or not. He is said to go about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. While men slept, the enemy came and sowed tares. So while Christians are off their guard, the enemy comes upon them, and tempts them to go astray.

From the weakness of human nature. Thus Christians sometimes go astray from God and things divine, leave their first love, lose their zeal and ardor in the ways of religion, and follow for a time their own natural inclinations. But David here

ACKNOWLEDGES A PLEASING FACT. It is the benefit of sanctified affliction. It was the means of his restoration to God: "but now have I kept thy word;" you will see its adaptation to this end, if you consider its tendency

To lead us to serious reflection. This is the first step to our return. If we do not consider, it is not likely we shall mend our ways.

To discover to us our error. It points us to our imperfections and short-comings; and is like the candle of the Lord in the heart, to show us our vileness and treachery; or like the refiner's fire, to separate between the gold of grace and the dross of corruption.

To correct us for our sin. Affliction is the scourge which our heavenly Father uses to chasten and correct his children; by this he separates the sin that he hates, from the soul that he loves.

To induce repentance. This was the case with the prodigal. Before he was afflicted, he went astray; but affliction brought him to himself, to reflection, to contrition, and at last to the paternal roof. The expression, keeping God's word, is used to signify the duties and exercises of the Christian life. Let us learn to recognize the Divine hand in our trials. "Providence," says Charnock, "is God's lantern in many affairs; if we do not follow it closely, we may be left in the dark and lose our way."

I'll welcome still the heaviest grief
That brings me near to thee.

July 15.

THE CAUSE, EVIL, AND REMEDY OF DESPAIR.

"And they said, There is no hope."—Jer. xviii. 12.

The two fatal rocks on which men split, are presumption and despair. Some have no fear, and say, "I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart;" others say, "There is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart." Both are destructive to the best interests of the soul. Let us contemplate despair in its cause, evil, and remedy.

Its cause. To what may it be attributed?

The accusations of a troubled conscience. This was the case with Cain, Judas, and others mentioned in holy writ.

The force of depraved habits. By a constant course of impiety and guilt, the mind becomes besotted. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? no more can ye do good, that are accustomed to do evil."

Misapprehensions of the nature of the Gospel. What confused notions have some entertained of it! what strong legal prejudices, desiring to find that in themselves which is only to be found in Christ?

Barrenness under the means of grace. Many who have long sat under the sound of the Gospel, and have derived no benefit, but are as careless and indifferent as ever, are ready to say, "There is no hope."

Its evil.

It dishonors GOD. It insults the Divine Being; gives the lie to the promises of his word, and the declarations of his grace, and plucks the brightest gem from his crown. *It destroys the soul.* Those who indulge in it cannot be saved. *It subverts the Gospel.* That declares there is hope, even for the vilest, and forbids us to cherish the feelings of despair.

Its remedy. This is threefold,—

A belief of the statements of the Gospel. This gives a direct contradiction to it. It is refuted by the mediation of Christ, by the promises of his word, by the gift of his Spirit, by millions who have obtained mercy. Ask Manasseh, Mary Magdalene, Saul, and others, whether there is no hope?

Repentance of your past conduct. There is no hope for the impenitent, but the broken heart shall be healed.

Earnest prayer. Let us seek to have a good hope through grace, and never despair of others, however careless and unconcerned. While the lamp of life still burns, let not our hopes for them expire. God is able to plant the flower of hope in the very bosom of despair.

"My spirit sinks within me, Lord;
But I will call thy grace to mind,
And times of past distress record,
When I have found my God was kind.

"O God! thou art my hope, my joy;
Thy light and truth shall guide me still;
Thy word shall my best thoughts employ,
And lead me to thy heavenly hill."

July 16.

THE NATURE AND FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH.

"Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."—Matt. xvi. 18.

MANY have sadly mistaken and perverted this passage, in making Peter the head of the Church. It is probable that, when our Lord uttered the words now before us, he pointed to himself,—"Upon this rock." Let us consider the Church in

ITS NATURE. It does not refer to a material building, but to an organized society. There is the church *visible*. By this is meant a society of persons, who, in different ages and places of the world, have made a profession of the true religion. It is an ancient, honorable, and important institution. To it pertain the oracles of God, the preaching of the Gospel, and the ordinances of religion. There is the church *invisible*. This is composed of true believers, who are spiritually united to Christ as their Head. It is a wide and extensive church, including all the possessors of piety, with whatever denomination they may be connected.

ITS OWNER. "My church." It is Christ's by sovereign choice; "chosen in him before the foundation of the world;"

chosen to holiness, happiness, and heaven. By covenant agreement. The members of the invisible church were given to Christ by the Father. By actual purchase. Believers are not their own, they are bought with a price; redeemed by blood divine. By powerful conquest. This conquest is made over them in conversion, which is the day of God's power. Finally, the church is his by voluntary consent. The will of the penitent sinner is sweetly and powerfully inclined to that of Christ, and he presents his body and soul a living sacrifice to the Divine Being. Contemplate the church in

Its FOUNDATION. "Upon *this* rock." Jesus Christ is often spoken of under the figure of a stone. The church is built upon a rock of firmness. All false systems of religion are built on sand, and shall sink in ruins; but the church is founded on Christ, the Rock of ages. For elevation. The church of Christ is far above the level of this world; its origin, privileges, enjoyments, and anticipations are high. For extent. Some rocks are very large, and extend to a great distance. How broad and extensive is the foundation of the church! Henry observes, "Those are not the church's friends that narrow its foundations." For safety. Some rocks have been fled to for safety in the time of danger. How safe are all those that build on Christ! For duration. Age after age the rock stands unmoved; and Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." How wise are they who build their hopes on Christ! The waters of affliction cannot drown them, the floods of temptation cannot overflow them, and they shall not sink in the swellings of Jordan. As Christ said, "Upon this rock I will build my church," let me say, "Upon this rock I will build my hopes."

July 17.

THE SAFETY OF THE CHURCH.

"Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."—Matt. xvi. 18.

Glorious things are spoken of the church of Christ. It is compared to a garden, a fold, a family, an army, and a city. Let us contemplate it in

Its BUILDER. "*I will build* my church." Christ is spoken

of as a builder in the language of prophecy, Zech. vi. 12, 13. As he is the foundation, so he is the builder; let us view this edifice

In its commencement. The foundation-stone of this church was laid in the councils of the Trinity; and the first signs of it were obscurely seen in paradise in the first promise: but it was more clearly beheld when the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.

In its progress. This building was carried on after the Great Master Builder had ascended up into heaven, by the ministration of the apostles, who were appointed as under builders. Three thousand, under Peter's sermon, on the day of Pentecost, were added to the Church, and became lively stones in this building. The building of the Church is now going forward; many spiritual workmen are employed in it. He builds his Church by converting sinners, and edifying his people.

In its consummation. The building is not yet finished; but ere long the top stone shall be brought with shouting, "Grace, grace unto it." It shall appear perfect and complete; exhibiting the most beautiful symmetry in every part; the glory of God, the wonder of saints, the admiration of angels, and the terror of all its adversaries.

Its safety. "And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." That is, the power and policy of the devil, and all the efforts of wicked man. Here is

Opposition implied. The Church of Christ has always been opposed, from its commencement to the present time, by Satan and his agents. Many are the gates of hell; the powers of darkness, daring infidels, cruel persecutors, and false teachers.

Security insured. They shall not prevail. The everlasting love of God, the mediation and intercession of Christ, and the Divine promises, all insure it. "The Church of God," says Dr. Krummacher, "is like a palm-tree, which flourishes the more vigorously the more it is pressed down. Every embarrassment is to her but as the weight to the clock, which keeps it going; and the most violent storms are to the Church but a brisk wind in the sails, which impels the vessel more rapidly towards the harbor." Let me rejoice in the security of Christ's Church, and desire above all things to be a true member of it. How divine its origin, how inestimable its privileges, how vast its honors, how imperishable its happiness!

July 18.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF PAST, AND CONFIDENCE IN FUTURE GOODNESS.

"Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear."—Psalm x. 17.

It is a just sentiment, that when the sun of the believer's hopes, according to common calculations, is set, to the eye of faith it is still visible, when much of the rest of the world is in darkness; the high ground of faith is illuminated with the brightness of religious consolation. In this Psalm we have a dark cloud of affliction, beautifully gilded with the enlivening beams of hope—the sun shining in the midst of a shower, and imprinting on the gloomy firmament the rainbow of mercy. Observe

The Christian's acknowledgment of the past goodness of God. There are three things mentioned of believers. *Their character*—"the humble." A sight of the evil of sin, and a view of the holiness of God, will induce humility. We have much to make us humble. Humility, like the plough, fits us for the seeds of mercy. The husbandman digs up the clogs to prepare the soil for the plants that are to be fixed in it, that they may thrive, bud, and bloom, and bring forth fruit. *Their desire.* As is the man, so are his desires—as is the fountain, so will be the streams. The believer's desires are principally for the soul; they are spiritual in their nature, and heavenly in their tendency. *Their privilege.* Their desire is heard. They have a Friend in the court above—a kind Intercessor; this is proved from Scripture testimony and personal experience.

The Christian's confidence in the future goodness of God. Consider

What God does in his people. "Thou wilt prepare their heart." This implies that the heart is naturally unprepared. Prov. xvi. 8. It is like an uncultivated wilderness, filled with weeds, thorns, and briers, having no flowers to bloom and shed their fragrance; but God prepares it, by softening it for the reception of the seed of the kingdom. The heart is by nature hard, cold, and insensible as the stone; he prepares it by melting it down, that it may receive the impress of his image, and feel the power of his grace. He prepares it for prayer, meditation, and all the Divine ordinances; he prepares it for inward

conflicts and outward trials, for the path of sorrow, the valley of death, and the realms of glory.

What God does for his people. "Thou wilt cause thine ears to hear." God first puts desires into the heart, and then hears and answers them. How many can testify to the truth of this! We may do much, by Divine aid, in the way of preparation; God prepares the heart in the use of the means. Especially when in the sanctuary, let us inquire whether our hearts are prepared. There is much truth in the remark, that the harp must be tuned well, if the cords are to harmonize, and refresh the ear with melodious strains; so there are preparatory exercises requisite to tune the heart for spiritual services.

July 19.

THE ENMITY OF THE HEART.

"The carnal mind is enmity against God."—Rom. viii. 7.

THE Bible makes the most important discoveries, both pleasing and painful. Our text will lead us to the consideration of a very humiliating and affecting subject—the depravity of man.

THE ARGUMENTS BY WHICH IT IS ESTABLISHED. The fact to be proved is, that man has fallen from his original state in which he was created; is not what he once was. This may be argued from

The physical disorders to which he is subject. Of how many bodily distempers and ailments is he the victim! If sin had not entered into the world, sickness and disease would have been forever unknown.

The anxiety, sorrow, and pain which attend his entrance into life. These are the bitter fruits of sin. "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children."

The existence of human laws, and the sanctions by which they are enforced. Daily observation furnishes us with proofs of the lamentable fact, that man is awfully depraved. Look to our courts of justice, codes of laws, and prisons; what do all these demonstrate?

The diversified trials with which he is visited. Apart from

bodily afflictions, what a share of mental distress and agony is he sometimes the subject of! Every pang, every groan, every smart, has a voice and says, "How art thou fallen!"

The fact of his dissolution. The depravity of man brings a long train of evils, which ends in death: "for sin brought death into the world, and all our woe."

The testimony of Scripture. How plainly is the fact of man's depravity laid down here! The passage before us is enough, if it stood alone.

THE PROPERTIES BY WHICH IT IS DISTINGUISHED.

It is inherent. Enmity holds its seat in the heart. Pride, covetousness, malice, hatred, self-will, passion, love of revenge, and a thousand similar evils, are but the ebullitions of this principle. *It is deceitful.* What depths of deceit are in the human heart! see Jer. xvii. 9. How subtle, artful, and insinuating is it in its operations! *It is malignant.* The carnal mind is enmity, against whom? Satan? our fellow-creatures? those who hate us? No, against God! the best, holiest, and most benevolent of beings. It is not only alienated from, but opposed to him. Man is not only a wanderer from his God, but a rebel against him. *It is practical.* The enmity of the heart displays itself in the opposition and wickedness of the life. Alienated from him "*by wicked works.*" *It is universal.* Both as it regards the powers and faculties of the soul; and as it respects the whole of mankind. Let us rejoice in that grace which can subdue our iniquity; and pray that we may feel its power in our own hearts.

July 20.

SPIRITUAL AFFECTIONS.

"Set your affections on things above, not on things of the earth."—Col. iii. 2.

THE grace of God is an elevating principle, leading the mind from the trifling objects of time to the grand realities of eternity. As the Christian is said to suffer with Christ, to be crucified and buried with him, so he is represented as being risen with him; ver. 1. Observe

THE SCOPE OF THE APOSTOLIC INJUNCTION. Here is

A prohibition. We are forbidden to set our affections on things on the earth. We must not pay an undue regard to

them—we must not expect too much from them—we must keep them in their proper place—hold them with a loose hand—give the preference to other objects; and be ready to yield them up at the Divine pleasure.

An exhortation. We are required to set our affections on things above. What things? Those objects that belong to the heavenly state, and those principles and feelings that are associated with our preparation for it: both are included in the term. Our affections are to be set on the things which are connected with the heavenly state; love to the Saviour, fellowship with his people, the enjoyment of ordinances, the cultivation of holy tempers and dispositions, in order to our better preparation for the eternal world; entire conformity to the Divine image, and perfect resignation to the Divine will. The subject requires us to estimate the real worth of things, to exercise a lively faith in invisible realities, and to have a heart weaned from the world.

THE MOTIVES BY WHICH IT MAY BE ENFORCED. Paul assigns several reasons in the following verses, 3 and 4. There are many considerations which should urge you to it.

Your dignified character. Think of the high distinctions which are associated with the possession of religion; and if you are real Christians, act up to your professions.

Your distinguished advantages. God has blest you with an abundance of spiritual means and resources, and you are accountable for the right use of them; you have golden seasons and valuable opportunities for so doing.

Your present enjoyments. There can be no solid comfort and happiness in licking the dust like the serpent; but heaven is begun below, when in the enjoyment of spiritual blessings you eat angels' food.

Your future destinies. If you would realize at last the full possession of heavenly things, you must set your affections on them now.

How have we to mourn our carnality and earthly mindedness! Let Christ be in our heart, and heaven in our eye, and then the world will be under our feet.

The world how mean, with all its store,
Compared with thee, my Lord!
Its vain and fleeting joys how few!
How little they afford!

July 21.

THE WONDERFUL SCENE.

"Christ crucified."—1 Cor. i. 23.

This is an inexhaustible subject—it contains the basis of our faith, the ground of our confidence, the object of our triumph, and the medium of all spiritual and eternal blessings. Behold in Christ crucified

A scene of glory. Glory as it refers to his character and perfections. He is the brightness of his Father's glory. In the cross we have an exhibition of all the Divine attributes in equal, united, and eternal splendor.

A scene of efficacy. In the death of Christ we find an answer to all the requirements of the law, and the demands of justice. Here our guilt is removed, our pardon is obtained, sin atoned for, hell vanquished, and heaven opened. This is the medium through which the influences of the Spirit descend upon us; and the foundation of our Saviour's prevalent intercession in heaven. By it, how many dead sinners have been quickened; how many sorrowful penitents have been made to rejoice; how many proud boasters have been humbled; how many desponding souls have been comforted!

A scene of ignominy. Many things connected with our Saviour's humiliation were ignominious: his introduction into the world; the meanness of his condition here; the epithets heaped on him; his being clothed with the purple robe; having a reed given to him for a sceptre; being crowned with thorns, and suffering the death of the cross.

A scene of love. This was the principle that constrained him to suffer so much. The greatness of his suffering did not prevent his attention to his mother, John xix. 26, 27. He did not forget the interests of the women that followed him weeping, Luke xxiii. 28. He prayed for his enemies, who were gnashing on him with their teeth: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." He heard the prayer of the thief who had reviled him; and said, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

A scene of responsibility. You must give an account of the manner in which you regard this solemn scene; there must be repentance for sin; faith in and love to Christ, and active exertions in his cause. If Christ was crucified for me, I must

be crucified to the world; dead to its spirit, principles, and maxims, and alive to him who died for me. The attractive influence of the cross, says one, is to us what the heat of the sun is to the moisture of the earth—the only drawing power; other doctrines may, like the moon, produce regular tides of formal worship, and, like the stars, brighten the surface of the character; but they shine too cold to regenerate the heart, or purify the conscience.

July 22.

THE CHRISTIAN IN CHRIST.

"Who also were in Christ before me."—Rom. xvi. 7.

The persons here spoken of are Andronicus and Junia, of whom much is said in a few words. It appears they were related to Paul, and suffered with him for the Gospel's sake; were eminent among the apostles, and had experienced a saving change, previous to the period of Paul's conversion. From this passage we learn,

It is the character of every Christian that he is in Christ. We may be great proficients in knowledge, and yet not be in Christ. Knowledge is a flower that may grow to a great height in the wilderness of corrupt nature. We may be regular in the performance of the outward duties of religion, and yet not be in Christ. Judas, Demas, Ananias and Sapphira, Hymeneus, and Philetus, once renowned as true Christians, made shipwreck of their faith. But what is it to be in Christ? It is

To be united to his matchless person. There are three mysterious unions in our holy religion: the spiritual union of the three Divine Persons in one Godhead; the personal union of the Divine and human natures of Christ; and the mystical union between Christ and his people. This union is *real.* This is evident from the figures and phrases by which it is expressed in Scripture, John xv. 1; Eph. ii. 20; v. 30. This union is *mysterious.* It is a mystery that shall be better understood in the light of glory. "At that day," says Christ, "shall ye know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you." It is *indissoluble.* It is only cemented by age, and strengthened by death; Rom. viii. 38, 39.

To be interested in his saving relations. As a Prophet, he is our light; as a Priest, he is our propitiation and Advocate; as a King, he subdues the enmity of our hearts, and defends us from the enemies of our souls. He is our Friend to confide in; our Physician to heal us.

To partake of his inestimable blessings. Those who are in Christ have a rich inheritance. They have peace with God, and peace of conscience; Christ is theirs; his Spirit is their guide; his covenant is their charter for the holy inheritance; his righteousness is their garment for the marriage supper of the Lamb; his fulness is their treasure; his promise is their security; and his heaven will be their everlasting home. It is the condition of all the ungodly that they are without Christ. Seek, therefore, to be in Christ; not only by professing his name, but by partaking of his grace, and living to his glory. Here is the test: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."

"Oh the rich depths of love divine,
Of bliss, a boundless store!
Dear Saviour, let me call thee mine,
I cannot wish for more!"

July 23.

THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING EARLY IN CHRIST.

"Who also were in Christ before me."—Rom. xvi. 7.

While it is the character of every Christian, that he is in Christ,

It is the privilege of some, that they are early in Christ. Let us consider the peculiar advantages of those who are early united to the Saviour.

They are sooner delivered from their spiritual miseries. Is not this desirable? The blessedness of the young convert above that of the old, may be illustrated by the case of two men cast into prison for debt: the one is released from his confinement by the creditor at the expiration of a few weeks; the other is not liberated till twenty or thirty years afterwards; the condition of the former is far preferable to that of the latter, if liberty is better than bondage.

They are prevented from the commission of much sin. What

a painful reflection must it be for aged converts that they have spent the best of their time in dishonoring God, and have perhaps been the means of enticing many from the path of rectitude, and leading them on in the way to eternal ruin! It is probable when Paul spoke of Andronicus and Junia being in Christ before him, he reviewed with the deepest sorrow and regret his own past history, in persecuting the church, and blaspheming the name of God.

They are more likely to attain to eminent piety. Those who are early brought to the knowledge of the truth, have more time and opportunity for making progress in their Christian course; and the longer grace is improved, the more we are likely to grow and increase in it. Early piety generally leads to eminent piety.

They have greater opportunities of being more extensively useful. The Christian is to live to God in a way of personal piety, and to others by relative usefulness. Those who embrace Christ, just as their sun is beginning to set, can do but little in his cause; for as soon as they begin to labor in the vineyard, the shadows of the evening gather around them, and warn them of the night, when no man can work. We might add, that the attainment of eminent piety and extensive usefulness will be crowned with greater glory above, "for one star differeth from another star in glory," 1 Cor. xv. 41; Dan. xii. 2. Though all the vessels in glory shall be filled to overflowing, yet some shall be capable of holding more than others. Let young converts rejoice and go forward. Let young inquirers be encouraged, and never rest till they are in Christ. Let the thoughtless and giddy young seek Christ as their chief good. Let the aged, who are yet out of Christ, remember that he can save even at the eleventh hour.

July 24.

RECEIVING THE HOLY GHOST.

"Have ye received the Holy Ghost?"—Acts xix. 2.

Many who sit under the preaching of the Gospel, and profess to believe, are ignorant of the saving operations of the Spirit of God. We have an instance of this in the context. This is a

very important question; let us put it to you, in reference to the various offices of the Spirit.

HAVE YOU RECEIVED HIM AS A SPIRIT OF CONVICTION? He convinces us of sin, *in its dreadful nature.* He tells us what sin is. Sin is never felt as a burden till the Spirit has discovered it to us in its true and hideous deformity: then we exclaim, "Behold I am vile." *In its alarming consequences.* Thus he tells what sin does, and what it will lead to if persisted in. It has robbed us of the Divine image and favor, and exposed us to the Divine wrath and displeasure.

HAVE YOU RECEIVED HIM AS A SPIRIT OF INSTRUCTION? He is given to impart light to the mind as well as conviction to the conscience. What does he teach? He shows to us the Saviour in *the glory of his Person.* Christ can only be seen in his glory, as he is beheld in the light of the Spirit, through the glass of the word. *The fulness of his grace.* The Spirit teaches us not only what Christ is, but what he has, and what he has done. He points out to us the suitableness of his grace, the plenitude of it, the consummation to which it leads, and the freeness by which it is characterized. *The sufficiency of his righteousness.* He first shows us the insufficiency of our own, and then the all-sufficiency of the Saviour's. *The reasonableness of his requirements.* He discovers to us the nature of those duties and exercises demanded at our hands, and assures us of the blessings and privileges associated with his service.

HAVE YOU RECEIVED HIM AS A SPIRIT OF CONVERSION? Thus he turns and changes the heart. It is a turning—from the world to religion. The Spirit teaches us the vanity of the pleasures, riches, honors, and expectations of the world, and the importance, necessity, and desirableness of religion. From ourselves to Christ. Then we renounce all ideas of obtaining salvation by our own deeds. Christ is all and in all. From the service of Satan to God. Thus the thraldom of sin is exchanged for the liberty of the Gospel, and the hard yoke of Satan for the easy yoke of Christ.

HAVE YOU RECEIVED HIM AS A SPIRIT OF CONSOLATION? He is styled the Comforter—the ider of comfort implies the existence of sorrow and trouble. He comforts the penitent sinner with a sense of pardon; the tried believer with an assurance of God's love to him; and the dying Christian by the supports of the Gospel. Reader, have you received the Holy Ghost?

July 25.

THE CHRISTIAN'S PRIVILEGE, PRAYER, AND PLEA.

"Help us, O Lord, our God! for we rest on thee."—2 Chron. xiv. 11.

Piety is lovely wherever it is seen, whether in the humble walks or higher ranks of life. Religion often dwells in a cottage, but rarely in a palace. We have an instance of a pious king before us: "Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God." In the field of battle, before encountering the enemy, he cried for help from on high. It is a suitable prayer for us at all times. Note

The Christian's privilege. He is permitted to own God as his,

By a gracious choice on the part of God. Salvation is all of grace, in its contrivance, accomplishment, and application—there is grace in the believer's calling, justification, sanctification, and glorification. He is chosen to be saved by him, walk after him, live to him, and spend eternity with him.

By a cheerful consent on the part of the believer. Thus he is made willing in the day of God's power. The Spirit kindles the first ray of light in the beclouded mind, and creates the first earnest desire towards God; and then there is a personal dedication of ourselves to him.

The Christian's prayer. "Help us, O Lord, our God!" We require help in our devotional exercises; the chariot wheels go heavily without a propelling influence from above; and if the fountain were to be shut up, the streams would soon be dry. Without Divine help there is no food in the sanctuary, no life in prayer, no delight in meditation, no communion in the closet. We need help in our spiritual conflicts. What is the use of our armor without the assistance of our Great Captain? We want help in our relative duties, that we may adorn the doctrines of God our Saviour in all things, social as well as sacred.

The Christian's plea. "For we rest on thee." This denotes a spiritual acquaintance with God—a strong confidence in him, and a patient waiting for him. Let us at all times rest on his word, and on the arm of his power, looking up to the glorious stars of promise that shine in the cloudy firmament—reposing amidst the waves of affliction like Noah in his ark—secure like a hero in his armor, or soldiers in a garrison.

July 26.

PEACE AND PROSPERITY.

"Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee."—Psalm cxxii. 7, 8.

Such are the effusions of a heart filled with love to God. In them consider

The desire expressed. Peace and prosperity. This we should implore

For ourselves. Personal piety is essentially requisite to prosperity in the various scenes and associations of life. What is the health of the body to the prosperity of the soul? what are common mercies to covenant blessings? what is a portion in life to a hope in death? If our souls are prosperous, there will be in us an increasing hatred to sin, and a growing desire after holiness.

For our families. How delightful is it to see pious parents training up their children for God; and most anxious that they may "live," in the best sense of the word, before him. Nothing insures domestic comfort and happiness so much as religion. Baxter remarks, that if parents did their duty, more would be savingly called in the family than in the sanctuary.

For the Church. We should desire peace and prosperity, not only for that section of the church to which we belong, but for the whole family of God. In proportion as we are attracted by the holy influence of the cross, shall we be drawn as with the power of the loadstone to each other; and our shades of difference will be eclipsed by the splendors of that glory with which we are enshrined.

The reason assigned. Three may be given.

The Redeemer's honor. This is involved in the prosperity of the Church. "Upon himself shall the crown flourish;" the crown of dignity and honor; and every redeemed sinner is a bright diamond in that crown, adding to its lustre, and increasing its brilliancy.

The Church's comfort. "For my brethren and companions' sakes." How refreshing and reviving is it to the minds of believers when peace and prosperity reign in the Church!

The minister's joy. This is closely identified with his usefulness. How can he rejoice if the cause of God is declining, and the love of many is waxing cold? "For what is our hope, or

joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not ye even in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? for ye are our glory and joy."

July 27.

BELIEVERS THE FRIENDS OF GOD.

"Abraham my friend."—Isa. xli. 8.

What an interesting character was Abraham! He is made honorable mention of both in the Old and New Testaments—he is called by way of eminence, "The father of the faithful." There is something delightful even in the name of friendship. Let us contemplate the friendship that exists between the believer and his God.

Its nature. In order to understand this, we must take two views of it.

The friendship God bears towards his people. It is gracious—it originates in his grace, and peculiarly displays it—it is divine, connected with divine things, and attended with divine communications—it is disinterested; here all the benefit is on our side, in earthly friendship it is mutual—it is watchful; our Divine Friend is continually watching over our best interests—it is inviolable; he will never betray our confidence, but will prove faithful to the last.

The friendship they bear towards God. What are its qualities? It is sincere; many make great professions of regard to us, who are insincere. Are we sincere in our attachment to the cause of God, and in our zeal for his glory? It is faithful. If we are the friends of God, we shall be faithful unto death, we shall confide in his promises, and rely on his covenant engagements. It is durable. Ah! how many profess to be the friends of God, and run well for a time, but ere long walk no more with him!

Its advantages. The most inestimable benefits result from it.

It confers real dignity. It is estimated an honor to claim friendship with the great and mighty of the earth; but what is this compared with the friendship of God? This ennobles the soul, and elevates the mind.

It is associated with solid pleasure. Friendship has its

sweets; but how often, while we are admiring the rose, are we prickled with the thorn!

"Each pleasure has its poison too,
And every sweet a snare."

It insures constant protection. With such a friend we must be safe. He has power in his arm, and vigilance in his eye, as well as pity in his heart.

It shall be consummated in eternal happiness. Soon all the friends of God shall be exalted to the realms of glory. Oh! let it be my highest ambition to have it said of me when I am no more, "He was called the friend of God."

"How firm the saint's foundation stands!
His hopes can ne'er remove,
Sustained by God's almighty hand,
And sheltered in his love."

July 28.

GOD'S GREATEST MERCY.

"Jesus answered them, Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of these works do ye stone me?"—John x. 32.

In reading the New Testament, we cannot but be struck at the rage and malice of the Jews towards our Saviour and his cause. In this chapter we find them manifesting great opposition, after he had declared the most gracious truths: "Then the Jews took up stones again, to stone him." He might have commanded fire to descend from heaven, and consume them for their sin; but he replies by putting a very touching, melting question, one would think enough to move them, "Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of these works do ye stone me?" Here we have two subjects of interesting contemplation, God's greatest mercy, and man's blackest crime.

God's greatest mercy. It is the gift of his Son to work good among us. Observe five things,—

His works. He came into the world not to live a life of idleness and ease, but to work. How early was he occupied in it! When only twelve years old his parents found him in the temple with the doctors; he said to his mother, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

Their quality. "*Good* works." Nothing else could have proceeded from him. He went about doing good. He performed miracles of mercy. He did good to the bodies and souls of men. Human redemption was the grand work he came into the world to perform.

Their number. "Many." His enemies acknowledge this. "This man doeth many miracles." His miracles tended to confirm one another. We have many recorded, but the half is not told us, see John xxi. 25. There is enough to assure us that he was the Son of God.

Their manifestation. "I have *showed* you." These vile creatures who attempted to stone him, had been eye-witnesses of many of his wonderful works. They were shown not for ostentation, but conviction.

Their appointment. "From my Father." As Mediator, he acted as the Father's servant. They were works out of the ordinary course of nature, above the power of a mere man to perform. How many good works in the preaching of the Gospel has he showed us! Where is our gratitude? How have we received him? Let God's greatest mercy be our highest joy.

July 29.

MAN'S BLACKEST CRIME.

"Jesus answered them, Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of these works do ye stone me?"—John x. 32.

We have noticed in these words, God's greatest mercy. Let us now consider

Man's blackest crime. For the good works our Lord performed, the Jews took up stones to stone him. Can we conceive of anything more awful, and which tends so much to show that degraded state into which human nature has sunk? For these good works they ought to have admired, loved, and received him; but how different was the conduct they evinced! Notice here

The depravity of man. The Jews furnished a dreadful exhibition of it. But it is not confined to them; how many are there, who, as it were, stone the Saviour again, crucify him afresh, and put him to an open shame! He is stoned in his

religion, in his cause, in his people. An injury done to them he considers as done to himself. Thus he said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" What good things religion engages to do for man! It would reclaim him in his wandering from God, restore him to the Divine favor and image, open to him the only source of happiness, dignify and ennoble his spirit, elevate him beyond the trifling things of time, and prepare him for a glorious immortality; these are good works, and for these it is stoned.

The forbearance of God. Here is a wonderful instance of it. Why were they not immediately struck dead, by an act of his signal vengeance? To give a display of his amazing patience, and prove to us the fact of a judgment to come. Persecutors oftentimes go long unpunished, not because the Almighty cannot inflict it on them, but to give them time to repent, and show us that he is not willing that any should perish. Account the long-suffering of God salvation.

The mildness of the Saviour. He asked, "For which of these works do ye stone me?" How well was it said of him, "full of grace and truth!" If he taught with authority, that authority was tempered with kindness; it was not the power of the hammer breaking the rock in pieces, but that of the spring melting the rigor of winter, changing the severity of the frost, and drawing out all into life and loveliness. Let us go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

July 30.

THE PRACTICAL INFLUENCE OF RELIGION.

"But so did not I, because of the fear of God."—Nehem. v. 15.

In the time of Nehemiah, the Jews were in a most deplorable state, of which this book furnishes an account. We see here the concern he felt in their welfare, and his endeavors to promote their good. "In this book," says Henry, "he records not only the works of his hands, but the workings of his heart." The text contains a beautiful sentiment, and will lead us to contemplate religion in two points of view.

Its COMMANDING PRINCIPLE. "The fear of God." This includes the whole of religion. Notice

Its seat. It has its residence in the heart. There can be no true religion where the heart is not concerned. Having the fear of God before the eyes is an outward effect of an inward cause.

Its nature. It consists in right apprehensions of the Divine character, and a reverential awe of the Divine glory and majesty; manifests itself in obedience to the Divine will, and submission to the Divine authority. "Fear God, and keep his commandments."

Its source. It originates from God. "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." The slavish dread of God which the wicked feel, arises from sin and a guilty conscience; but the filial fear experienced by believers is the result of imparted grace, and a conscience sprinkled with the blood of Christ. Let us look at religion in

ITS PRACTICAL INFLUENCE. "But so did not I." That is, Nehemiah could not act as the ungodly did, because of the restraining influence of the principle he possessed. We remark of this principle, that

It is extensive in its range. It will lead to an uniformity and consistency of character. It induces us to abstain from all that is sinful, use moderation in all things lawful, and exercise diligence in religious concerns. It will influence us in our secret devotions, in our domestic duties, and in our public exercises.

It is decisive in its nature. It enables us to act with fixedness and decision of mind, with a determination which becomes the followers of God, neither allured by the smiles, nor intimidated by the frowns, of those who are pursuing a contrary course.

It is habitual in its exercise. It is not a principle operating by fits and starts, but steady and continual in its actings; thus we are enjoined to be in the fear of the Lord all the day long. May this fear be implanted in our hearts!

With my whole heart I've sought thy face;
O, let me never stray
From thy commands, O God of grace,
Nor tread the sinner's way.

My God, I long, I hope, I wait,
For thy salvation still;
Thy holy law is my delight,
And I obey thy will.

July 31.

PARENTAL NEGLECT.

"A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame."—Prov. xxix. 15.

How important the situation, and how great the responsibility, of the parental character! The Bible insists much on the various duties of parents and children; and if these counsels were attended to, how much more happy and peaceful would many families be! In this passage we have two things.

An affecting case. "A child left to himself," that is,

Without suitable instruction. Instruction to the mind is what food is to the body: "That the soul be without knowledge is not good." How many parents are concerned to give their children a good education, but feel no anxiety that they should be acquainted with Him whom to know is life eternal! Give them knowledge suited to their age and capacities; acquaint them with their sin, their danger, their duty, and their need of a Saviour.

Without fervent prayer. This is a duty too much neglected by many professing parents; pray with them around the family altar, and for them in your secret devotions. Pray for the blessing of God on the means you adopt for their good.

Without a good example. How many undo by their example what they effected by their instructions! The parent's example is a living lesson. How is the child to learn the beauties of holiness, when he beholds in his parents the deformity of vice?

Without proper restraint. Instruction must be followed with prayer, illustrated by example, then enforced with authority. The happy medium must be followed, between too great severity on the one hand, and too great laxity on the other. What punishment Eli brought on himself and his house, "because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not!"

A painful consequence. "Bringeth his mother to shame," and his father too, sometimes. This is the case with regard to the conduct of the child—he may choose the society of the gay, licentious, and dissipated, and run into every excess of riot. There is the shame of conscious weakness in the indulgence of the child, sometimes the shame of poverty and reproach; and not unfrequently the vices of the child plunge the parent into the greatest distress.

August 1.

THE SEED-TIME OF SORROW.

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."—Psalm cxxvi. 5.

The Scriptures abound with allusions to husbandry and the arts of agriculture; we have an instance before us. Let us contemplate

The believer's seed-time. It is a period of sorrow.

Let us justify the metaphor. In what respects may the Christian be compared to a sower? Here is the idea of diligence; what labor is required in the preparation of the soil before the seed is cast into it! the land must be ploughed, manured, and cultivated, or there can be no expectation of a crop. Will not this apply to spiritual things? God gives his word, sends his ministers, visits with affliction, and pours out his Spirit, that the fallow ground may be broken up, and the heart be made soft. Ministers must be diligent in their spiritual husbandry; prudence also is required. Much depends on the selection of a proper season for sowing,—the wind and weather must be watched. And have not Christians need of prudence? We must watch our seasons for doing good; our zeal is likely to do more harm than good, unless it be tempered with prudence. There must be confidence. The husbandman buries the grain in the earth, in hope of realizing a good harvest; and he believes this will be the case, according to the connection existing between causes and effects. The Christian sower needs hope. What is it that stimulates him in duties the most arduous, and supports him amidst difficulties the most trying, and often the most appalling? It is the hope of success. The husbandman requires patience; he must wait till the time of harvest,—James v. 7. And so it is with the Christian; he shall reap in "due time."

Let us explain the truth. This will lead us to consider the believer as a sorrowful sower—"They that sow in tears." The first seeds are sown in the tears of repentance; and how often does he exclaim with tears in his eyes, "Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief!" Lavington says, some of the best crops have been produced from seed sown in a storm. Paul speaks of "serving the Lord with many tears," and he says to Timothy, "being mindful of thy tears." How often have the minister's instructions been bedewed with his tears! The mother of

Augustine is said to have planted the precepts of life in his mind by her words, watered them with her tears, and nourished them by her example. How delightful to remember that the seed-time of sorrow shall be succeeded with the harvest of joy!

August 2.

THE HARVEST OF JOY.

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."—Psalm cxxvi. 5.

HAVING considered the seed-time of the believer, as a period of sorrow, let us now contemplate

THE BELIEVER'S HARVEST. It is a season of joy. We may ask, when, where, and in what manner shall he reap?

On earth the first fruits are gathered. The harvest is actually commenced here. There is a rest above, but we who believe do enter into rest. There is a river of water of life in the heavenly paradise, but some of its streams flow in the Zion below. There is an inheritance beyond the skies, but the earnest of it is enjoyed here. There is a glory to be revealed, but

"The men of grace have found
Glory begun below."

There is a general harvest that shall be gathered on the celestial plains, but a few sheaves are taken even here, and waved before the Lord.

In heaven the harvest will be complete. The time of the gathering in of the harvest is one of mirth and hilarity; then the cares and anxieties of the husbandman cease for a time, but he must soon begin to prepare for the succeeding year's crop. But with regard to the believer, we must drop the metaphor; when he arrives in heaven, and shouts the harvest home, there shall be no more sowing, no more weeping. Oh! what joy and triumph shall be felt on the fields of the heavenly Canaan, when the laborers are all called home, and invited to an immortal rest!

There purity with love appears,
And bliss without alloy;
There they that oft had sown in tears
Shall reap again in joy.

August 3.

LOVE.

"The fruit of the Spirit is love."—Gal. v. 22.

The Apostle places before us the wonderful contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit, which proves to us the excellence of religion. The heart is not the seat of these spiritual depositions by nature; the Spirit must dwell in us, in order to produce this lovely train of Christian graces. The first fruit we are to examine is Love. Observe

The objects to which it is directed.

GOD. "The carnal mind is enmity against God;" but love to him is a distinguishing mark of the new nature. There must be new principles implanted in our hearts, ere we can love a God of infinite purity, truth, and rectitude.

Our fellow-Christians. If our love to God is genuine, we shall love the brotherhood,—1 John iii. 14. How important is it for Christians to cultivate this spirit, that, instead of being severed from each other by hatred, they may be knit together in love!

Mankind in general. We are bound by the most solemn ties to love our brethren in Christ, but it must not be confined within such narrow limits: the laws of nature, as well as of God, bind us to love all.

The manner in which it is displayed.

In genuine devotedness. If we are sincere in our professions of attachment to God, we shall delight in pouring out our hearts to him in prayer, and giving up ourselves to him in self-dedication.

In cheerful obedience. This is the Divine test. "If ye love me, keep my commandments. If his Spirit resides in you, all his commands will meet your ready and cheerful compliance.

In active zeal. That zeal that can rise above party walls and denominational peculiarities, like the sun in the firmament, moving onward in its course, and giving light and heat to all around—not an ostentatious display, but an unassuming, calm, steady, persevering effort: well-tempered, well-timed, well-directed; not a timid feeling, that leads us to act the coward, when opposed; but a bold, intrepid spirit.

In Christian sympathy. We are to bear each other's burdens, and to serve one another in love. There must be fidelity

as well as feeling. Love will not expose a friend's faults; but it will lead its possessor to go silently and secretly to him, and admonish and reprove him. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend."

In universal benevolence. It will regard the moral and spiritual interests of all mankind, co-operate in all plans of usefulness, and aid in those institutions that are formed for the circulation of the Scriptures, and the diffusion of the Gospel. Paul gives us the distinguishing marks and features of love,—1 Cor. xiii. Christians, let us lay hold on the golden chain of love, that it may unite us closer to each other, and bind us all to God.

August 4.

JOY.

"The fruit of the Spirit is joy."—Gal. v. 22.

The worldling contends that there can be no joy apart from that which is derived from the sources of pleasure and amusement furnished by the world. But these speak evil of the things they know not, and condemn a system altogether, they have never tried in part. Let us consider the sources and the signs of this joy.

Its sources. The Christian's joy arises from

The providence of God. And we might say his very being and perfections. His providence is so vast, that it comprehends the loftiest intelligences he has created; and so minute that it includes the smallest insect.

The mediation of Christ. Were it not for this, we could not approach the Divine Being. "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The Christian rejoices in the atoning sacrifice, as well as the lovely example and the prevailing intercession of Christ.

The influence of the Spirit. Without this, the glories and excellences of Christ resemble a lovely landscape, without the warmth, genial influence, and coloring of the sun. The Christian rejoices in the gracious work and offices of the Spirit, as a Convincer, Instructor, Comforter, Advocate, and Witness. This joy is termed "joy in the Holy Ghost."

The anticipation of heaven. While the believer contem-

plates with pleasure and satisfaction the work of grace being carried on in his heart, he rejoices in hope of the glory of God. Contemplate this joy in

Its signs.

It is enlivening. It inspires us with cheerfulness and holy mirth; enlivens us in duties, devotional exercises, relative obligations, and trials. It is like a golden rainbow in the clouds, and as a float to the net to keep it above water. *It is expanding.* It enlarges our thoughts, desires, views, and feelings. It has no room to range in a heart that is not opened by the Spirit of God. *It is humbling.* While the believer knows he has reason to rejoice in the work of grace, he never forgets he has enough to mourn over in the corruptions of nature. *It is sanctifying.* It sanctifies the temper, disposition, and affections. Thus it is a holy feeling, and cannot exist in an unrenewed heart. *It is generous.* The possessor of it does not wish to enjoy it alone. His language is, "Rejoice with me, I have found Christ."

August 5.

PEACE.

"The fruit of the Spirit is peace."—Gal. v. 22.

The Gospel is a system of peace; God is the author of peace; Christ is the Prince of peace, and "the fruit of the Spirit is peace." Christians are the sons of peace. Three things may be remarked concerning this grace.

What it includes.

Peace with God. Our natural state is one of enmity with God, and alienation from him. By grace, enmity is exchanged for love, and we are reconciled to him by the blood of Christ.

Peace of conscience. This is the immediate effect of our peace with God. While the heart is alienated from him, there is a disturbance within, that no external circumstances can quell. Everything around us may be peaceful and tranquil, like the summer brook, while all within may be agitated and perturbed, like the troubled sea.

Peace with one another. A friendly and peaceable temper and disposition is in accordance with the Gospel we profess, and the Master we serve.

What it requires.

Personal sacrifice. There must be the exercise of self-denial and forbearance. A self-willed, obstinate temper is opposed to a spirit of Christian peace. For the maintaining of peace, we must often sacrifice pride, prejudice, our feelings and comforts.

Continual watchfulness. He that has subdued his own spirit is a greater conqueror than Alexander or Cæsar. How many brave generals have made the most illustrious achievements, conquered nations, and subdued kingdoms, and at last have had an enemy within they could not overcome!

Persevering efforts. Christians are not only called on to be peace-seekers, but peace-makers. We should be ready with the still water of Christian love and charity to quench the first sparks of discord, before they are kindled by unholy breath into a flame of unhallowed fire. "Follow peace."

What it insures. Many privileges are connected with it.

It is associated with the Divine favor. The development of such a disposition is an evidence of our spiritual sonship. It will promote our individual happiness. There is a delightful feeling experienced by the sons of peace, which the children of discord never knew.

It will secure the esteem of others. Individuals who cultivate such a godlike disposition, are an incalculable blessing, both to the church and the world. How culpable are many professing Christians, who display a spirit quite contrary to that of their Divine Master, who was meek and lowly in heart; and thus dishonor religion, please the enemy, and grieve the Holy Spirit of God!

August 6.

LONG-SUFFERING.

"The fruit of the Spirit is long-suffering."—Gal. v. 22.

Religion not only alters the state of its possessor, but produces a pleasing change in his disposition. "The fruit of the Spirit is long-suffering." Let us describe

The nature of this Christian grace. We may view it in three ways:—

In connection with the dealings of God. There are *the*

mysteries of revelation. How many things here are beyond our depth!—we must exercise patience and long-suffering, and wait for the period when every difficulty will be solved and every mystery unravelled. There is *the darkness of Providence.* Afflictions are as the shades or dark ground of the picture, which tend more clearly to set forth the bright colors that are afterwards put on; we must wait for the finishing stroke, the last touch of the limner, before we pronounce our judgment.

With regard to the conduct of men. How painful and trying is it to witness the impiety and irreligion of the wicked! We must also bear with the failings of good men; in the garden of the Church the weeds of corruption are mingled with the flowers of grace. We must bear one another's burdens, and cultivate a forgiving spirit.

In reference to the temptations of Satan. In what a variety of ways does he assault us! If we would vanquish, we must be long-suffering:—"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation."

THE MOTIVES WHICH SHOULD EXCITE US TO THE EXERCISE OF IT.

The long-suffering of God. Oh! what a pattern have we here! How long has he suffered our manners in the wilderness, our barrenness under the means of grace, and our ingratitude for favors received! Let us be followers of God as dear children.

The example of Christ. Read the Gospel, and see how he bore with the opposition of his enemies, and the failings of his friends. What patience and long-suffering did he evince, under the most trying provocations! 1 Peter ii. 21–23.

The claims of religion. Contemplate the genius and spirit of Christianity. It requires the exercise of this grace.

The pattern of believers. We have many striking instances of the display of such a spirit. Look at Joseph, Moses, David, Stephen, Paul, and others, mentioned in Holy Writ. Have we not to condemn ourselves for our forgetfulness of his grace? Have we not sometimes brought forth the bitter fruit of impatience, instead of the fruit of the Spirit, which is long-suffering?

Be thou my pattern; make me bear
More of thy gracious image here.

August 7.

GENTLENESS.

"The fruit of the Spirit is gentleness."—Gal. v. 22.

There is a great difference between gentleness and meekness. Meekness is a passive virtue, and consists in the patient endurance of injuries; but gentleness is an active grace, a spiritual disposition of the mind. It is a true remark, that the world endeavors to counterfeit this grace by what is termed politeness; but when slights or insults arise, this worldly gem soon discovers its worthless composition, while the Gospel jewel brightens by attrition. Let us consider

The evils to which it is opposed. *To a spirit of pride.* This lovely fruit is never yielded from a proud and haughty spirit. It is not the product of an unhumbled heart. *To a feeling of severity.* A harsh, severe, and censorious temper is more allied to the spirit of Satan than to the spirit of Christ. Thus we read of "the gentleness of Christ." *To the rage of passion.* The man who cannot curb his passion, and restrain and govern his temper, gives no proof of his religion; for "the fruit of the Spirit is gentleness."

The scenes in which it is to be exercised. Where are you called upon to manifest this temper?

In your families. Circumstances will arise here, to ruffle the temper, and disturb the mind; but we must be gentle. "Be angry and sin not."

In the church. How lamentable to see in those who ought to show the gentleness of a lamb, the rage of a lion! They have not so learned Christ. There must be gentleness in our dealings with those who have wronged us, gentleness in our spheres of usefulness and exertion.

In your intercourse with mankind in general. Thus we are to be patient toward all men; and if from some we receive railing and cursing, while we are firm and faithful in rebuking them for their sins, let us be gentle and tender; and thus show that it is not them, but their sins, that we hate.

The manner in which it is to be displayed.

In our temper. Many Christians neglect to watch over their inward feelings; and the dispositions they show are unbecoming and unlovely: let us breathe gentleness.

In our language. If the mind is the seat of gentleness, the

manners will be the vehicle, and the lips the expression of it. The words are not always in accordance with the feelings. There may be the look of kindness in the eye, and the expression of gentleness on the lips, while there is the spirit of enmity in the heart.

In our actions. Thus we are to give practical proofs of such a gentle spirit; let us beware of indulging in a contrary feeling. Such a course will be dishonorable to God, discreditable to religion, unpleasant to ourselves, and may prove a serious injury to others.

August 8.

GOODNESS.

"The fruit of the Spirit is goodness."—Gal. v. 22.

We still find ourselves in the garden of the Lord, under the tree of grace, admiring the verdure of its leaves, the beauty of its blossoms, and the rich clusters of its fruits. Consider

The objects to which this grace is directed.

The relief of temporal distress. "Goodness" shows itself not only in endeavoring to relieve those cases that come under our immediate attention, but in seeking out the scenes of misery and hovels of wretchedness that would otherwise be hidden from our view.

The communication of spiritual good. What means and opportunities have we for this, in teaching in the Sabbath School, and thus being the instruments of imparting moral and spiritual instruction to those who are ignorant and out of the way; in the distribution of tracts, and other methods for the diffusion of knowledge. What an honor to be the means of winning souls to God, to Christ, and to heaven!

The properties by which it is distinguished.

It is Divine in its source. This fruit is the product of a tree that does not grow in nature's soil. It is very different from that good nature which is exercised by those who are not the subjects of grace. God is angry with the wicked every day, yet he suffers his sun to shine, his breeze to blow, and his rain to descend on them. He is both the source and pattern of all true benevolence.

It is disinterested in its nature. The pulse of Christian phi-

lanthropy beats in the hearts of comparatively few. This principle does not seek a recompense, nor court applause; the pleasure derived, and the reward received, are in the act itself, not from the expectation of any advantage to be obtained. True benevolence courts secrecy, instead of sounding a trumpet.

It is impartial in its character. It is not to be exercised under the influence of caprice, or regulated by the feelings of prejudice. It does not refuse objects of need, because they happen to belong to another section of the church than that with which it is connected. It does not ask, before it proffers its aid, what sect or party does he belong to, but simply inquires what is his need.

It is persevering in its exertions. Resembling not the lightning's flash, but the untiring course of the sun, Eccles. xi. 6. What a contrast is there between the benevolent Christian and the selfish worldling! The one grasps the world in the arms of his benevolence, the other has all his thoughts and desires centered in himself.

August 9.

FAITH.

"The fruit of the Spirit is faith."—Gal. v. 22.

The term faith, as used in Scripture, has several acceptations. The system of Christianity is designated "the faith." Faith is that principle by which we are justified in the sight of God, as we are enabled to believe in the righteousness of Christ. In the passage before us, we are led to view the operation of this principle. It includes

Sincerity of heart. The tree must first be made good, or we cannot expect that the fruit should be so. Sincerity is the very soul of religion, and the seat of godliness is in the heart. All our religious professions and performances will be unavailing if we are insincere.

"For God abhors the sacrifice
Where not the heart is found."

Truth in language. This requirement is binding on us as men, but especially as Christians; and it is violated by lying, prevarication, and exaggeration. There is no knowing to what

awful lengths an individual will run when he once forsakes the standard of truth, and thinks lightly of a falsehood.

Integrity of conduct. We must be just and honorable in our dealings with mankind. Every representation we make must be correct to the best of our knowledge, and every promise fulfilled to the fullest extent of our ability and means. There must be a diligent and conscientious discharge of the various duties incumbent on us in the different stations in which Divine Providence has placed us; there are sacred and social obligations, there are also talents with which God has intrusted some, such as genius, station, talent, wealth, and time. Let us think seriously of the period when the season of our probation shall terminate, and our final account must be rendered to our Judge.

August 10.

MEEKNESS.

"The fruit of the Spirit is meekness."—Gal. v. 23.

Believers are to resemble the serpent in wisdom, the dove in harmlessness, the lion in boldness, the eagle in swiftness and elevation, and the lamb in meekness. There are three kinds of meekness: one is the gift of nature, the other is the effect of cultivation, and the third is the product of grace. "The fruit of the Spirit is meekness." Let us contemplate

Its nature. In what does it consist? *In low views of ourselves.* The breath of pride would be like a thick incrustation to the diamond of meekness, which must be rubbed off before it would shine in its native splendor. *In a cheerful resignation to the Divine will.* Christian meekness shows itself in bowing with submission under trying dispensations, like the bending reed beneath the storm. *In the patient endurance of injuries.* It is not easily provoked. Henry observes, "Where the fire of love is kept in, the flames of wrath will not easily kindle, nor long keep burning." Meekness would rather forgive twenty injuries than resent one.

Its exercise. There are many scenes in which it is to be displayed, but more particularly

In withstanding opposition. With this we must lay our account, and our object should be to show a meek spirit, heaping

coals of fire on the heads of our enemies, to melt and soften them down.

In restoring the offender. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one." But how? In a cross, unkind, and severe manner? In a harsh and petulant temper? No, "in a spirit of meekness."

In defending the truth. "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves." When sincere inquiries are made respecting your principles and experience, show the same spirit. "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."

Its advantages. The meek shall be *divinely guided;* led in a right way, in a wise manner, and to a glorious end; "for the meek will he teach his way." They shall be *duly exalted;* "for the Lord lifteth up the meek." They shall be *greatly endowed;* for "the meek shall inherit the earth," and heaven too. They shall be *richly adorned;* for "the meek will he beautify with salvation." This is the ornamental part of the Christian's dress; he must wear it if he puts on Christ, for he is meek and lowly in heart. Blessed God, let me have access to the wardrobe of grace, and with the key of prayer, turned by the hand of faith, unlock its treasures, and find the robe of righteousness, the garments of salvation, the clothing of humility, and the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit!

August 11.

TEMPERANCE.

"The fruit of the Spirit is temperance."—Gal. v. 23.

"Let us who are of the day be sober." Sobriety here is of extensive latitude. It includes not only freedom from excess of drinking, but moderation in all things. In this sense the word temperance is used in our text. It is opposed to all excess of self-indulgence, to all excess of abstinence and self-denial, and to all excess of mental excitement.

The objects to which it refers. It must influence us

In all our temporal enjoyments. There are many pleasures and recreations, lawful and innocent in themselves, but which

become sinful by our intemperate use of them. Christians, "let your moderation be known unto all men."

In all our worldly expectations. Ambition in divine things is laudable, and covetousness for the best gifts is enjoined; but, with regard to this world, our desires and expectations are to be limited. There are some whose souls seem too large for their bodies, and too lofty for their circumstances; they will not learn the lesson of contentment

In all our earthly attachments. There are many idol temples erected in the heart before conversion; but grace overthrows them, and then the heart itself becomes a temple dedicated to Jehovah's praise and glory. Love to the creature is not forbidden, but it must always be in subserviency to the love of God.

THE ARGUMENTS BY WHICH IT MAY BE ENFORCED.

Our personal comfort. How often are we called to witness the painful effects of intemperance! But there is an inward pleasure and satisfaction to the mind, arising from the cultivation of this Christian grace: it is a pleasant fruit.

Our religious profession. Consistency to the principles we have embraced demands it. If Christians go to the same excess as the worldling in unlawful indulgences, it may well be said to them, "What do ye more than others?"

Our eternal destination. Shall those who are destined to soar in the regions of bliss, grovel in the dust of worldly enjoyments? You are looking for a never-fading crown: how unreasonable that you should be pleased with a gaudy toy!

August 12.

STRONG FAITH.

"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."—Job xiii. 15.

FAITH is an invaluable grace—it is justly represented as the spring that sets all the golden wheels of love, comfort, and peace, in motion; like the bee, it sucks sweetness out of every flower; it discerns a rainbow in the storm, and sees the sun behind the darkest cloud. We have heard of the patience of Job, whose language we are now to consider. We have here

An extreme case supposed. "Though he slay me." In what respects may God be said to do this?

When he visits with severe affliction. How often are his dispensations towards us enveloped in darkness! and where we expected to pluck the rose of comfort, we are pricked with the thorn of sorrow.

When he withholds Divine comforts. These are trying seasons to the Christian, in which he exclaims, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!"

When he deprives us of endeared connections. How many have to mourn with David, "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." With them how many of our fond hopes and expectations are blighted and slain?

When he brings us to death itself. The period, manner, and circumstances of our dissolution, are all under his sovereign control. Our times are in his hand.

The entire confidence expressed. "Yet will I trust in him." This is not a presumptuous or vain hope, but a well-grounded confidence. It is fully justified, and happy are they who can exercise it. In doing it you have a four-fold warrant: —*The faithfulness of his character;* for "he is not a man that he should lie:"—*The death of his Son;* by this the everlasting covenant is ratified:—*The promises of his word;* these are your rod and staff to lean upon:—*The experience of his people;* "Our fathers trusted him, and they were not ashamed." Let us follow the track which they pursued, and avail ourselves of the way-marks of experience they have erected. Lord, show me the footsteps of thy flock; and where I cannot trace thy way, help me to trust thy wisdom.

August 13.

THE LAUDABLE PURSUIT.

"Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another."—Rom. xiv. 9.

In this chapter, Paul enjoins a proper regard to the essentials of Christianity, but forbids that rigid particularity in things indifferent, which some of the Christians at Rome seem to have observed. The counsel he gives is suitable to believers in every age. Contemplate

THE CHRISTIAN DUTIES RECOMMENDED.

Peace. What are the things that make for peace? *A spirit of humility.* Pride is an enemy to peace, but humility befriends it. *A spirit of candor.* This makes for peace, while a censorious temper breeds discord. Be liberal in your opinions of those who may differ from you. Act according to the convictions of your own mind, and allow others to do the same. Who made you an infallible judge? *A spirit of love.* Love the saints, not only as they are of the human family, according to the law of nature, but as they are of the household of faith, according to the rules of grace. *A spirit of forgiveness.* Imitate the example of Him whose life was a perfect standard of moral excellence.

Mutual edification. "And things wherewith one may edify another." We are to be concerned, not only for our own edification, improvement, and progress in Divine things, but that of others. What are the things that tend to mutual edification? Christian conversation, a holy example, social prayer, and kind reproofs. These things are to be followed, pursued eagerly, which implies the existence of difficulty and the requirement of diligence.

THE MOTIVES WHICH SHOULD INFLUENCE TO THE PERFORMANCE OF THEM. By such a course you will

Maintain your Christian consistency. It is demanded of you, as those who have come out of the world, and entered the church. By it you will

Realize mutual blessings. If these two duties are not followed, there can be no prosperity of soul, no internal peace and satisfaction. It will

Secure the Divine approval. "His favor is life." God smiles on such a state of things. Let parents, heads of families, and all, seek these things, and follow them. The text refers to all. None are so strong but may be edified, none so weak but may edify.

My dear Redeemer and my Lord,
I read my duty in thy word;
But in thy life the law appears,
Drawn out in living characters.

Such was thy truth, and such thy zeal,
Such deference to thy Father's will,
Such love and meekness so divine,
I would transcribe, and make them mine.

August 14.

THE CHRISTIAN'S REMEMBRANCE OF PAST EXPERIENCE.

"O my soul! thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord."—Psalm xvi. 2.

Experimental religion is a gem of incalculable worth; no artificial ornaments of external knowledge will compensate for the want of it. In the commencement of this Psalm we have David's retrospect of past experience; in the conclusion of it, his anticipations of future glory.

The solemn act referred to. It is the act of personal dedication to God. Note here, *The renunciation implied.* When the soul is consecrated to God, the service of other masters is cast off. "Other lords besides thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name." *The covenant made.* Every Christian has entered into a solemn engagement to give himself up to God for life and death. *The portion claimed.* "Thou art *my Lord.*" The word *Adonai* signifies, My stayer. God is the only stay and support of the soul. *The sincerity evinced.* "O my soul," &c. Dedication to God is an act of the soul. But when is it expressed? In conversion it is first done, but it is repeated in after-seasons —at the throne of grace—in the sanctuary, before his people—at the sacramental table. This self-dedication to God is the most important act in our lives.

The beneficial effects which a remembrance of it will produce. *In resisting temptation.* When we are tempted to turn aside from the right way, a remembrance of the vows we have made to live to God, will lead us to resist the enemy. *In enduring affliction.* When all is dark around, and we are sorely tried, let us remember whose we are, and whom we serve. Our God is able to deliver us. *In the time of desertion.* Believers are sometimes under the hidings of God's face; a remembrance of past experience, and relief derived, will cheer them in soul distress. *In the anticipation of death.* Think then of the personal surrender you have made, and comfort yourselves with the firm belief of his faithfulness. If you have lived to him you shall die in him. It concerns me to know whether I have said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord.

August 15.

THE DIVINE AND NEW NATURE.

"Partakers of the Divine nature."—2 Pet. i. 4.

Here is the golden link of union between God and his people, the mysterious ladder by which we ascend to him, the spiritual transformation by which we are made like him. Let us

Offer some cautions against the misapprehension of this passage. The Divine nature believers are here said to be partakers of, is not a participation of the Divine essence, for this is incommunicable to any creature; nor is it a personal union with the Divine nature, as the human nature of Christ. It is the Divine impression of God's holy image on the soul, or a holy principle infused into it. *There are excellences in the new nature which would be imperfections in God.* Reverence, fear, humility, faith, and obedience, are virtues in a reasonable being; but they cannot belong to the Divine nature of God. *There are perfections in God which bear no resemblance to the new nature.* To affect a resemblance of God in some of his perfections, such as independence, supremacy, omniscience, and other attributes, would display the greatest arrogance. *Though Christians are partakers of the Divine nature, yet there is a great disproportion between the original and the transcript.* The image of God is very imperfect in the best Christians in the present state. There is a vast difference between the holiness of God and that of holy angels and glorified saints. This difference is expressed by bold figures. "He charged his angels with folly." Not that there is impurity in heaven; but God is holy in a more perfect sense than ever any creature can be. He is necessarily and essentially so. Saints and angels are perfectly holy, yet their holiness flows not from a necessity of nature, as God's does, but from the will and grace of the Divine Being. *The assuming of a new name is very different from partaking of the Divine nature.* Christianity would have been a poor system, and not worthy the solemn credentials with which God introduced it into the world, if all its intention had been to separate a people from others by a new name. "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly," Rom. ii. 28, 29. *Many are possessed of good natural qualities who are not partakers of the Divine nature.* Some of the heathen philosophers were so remarkable

for their amiable and good dispositions, that hardly any provocation from friend or foe could ruffle their spirit. The natural disposition may be soft and winning, while the heart is hardened in sin, and alienated from the life of God. What will the name and espousal of Christianity avail, without the spirit and nature of Christ?

August 16.

THE NATURE OF THE DIVINE PARTICIPATION.

"Partakers of the Divine nature."—2 Pet. i. 4.

This refers to believers, and furnishes us with a short but interesting description of them. Let us

Present some remarks for the right understanding of this passage. Why is this new principle called a Divine nature? First, because it is derived from God. Secondly, because it leads to God. Thirdly, because it makes us like God. In what respects is the new nature like God?

As it is a living principle. The meanest insect in respect of its life is more excellent than the sun in the heavens. "A living dog is better than a dead lion." How much better, then, is a living saint than a dead sinner!

As it is a spiritual principle. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." It is so called in opposition to corrupt nature, which is styled flesh, because it has a spiritual discernment, delights in spiritual duties, and in the contemplation of spiritual objects.

As it is an active principle. God is an active Being; hence we read that he never slumbers nor sleeps. As soon as the new nature is implanted in the soul, it exerts itself in acts of faith, hope, love, and joy, inwardly in the heart; and outwardly in the life, by an obedience to God's commands and ordinances.

As it is a loving principle. "God is love," and the chief ingredient in the new nature is love: love to God, because of his glorious perfections and works; love to the saints, as they bear the Divine image; and love to our enemies, in compliance with the command of Christ.

As it is an immortal principle. "Whatsoever is born of

God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him;" that is, the principle of the new nature remains. In the want of assurance, Christians may lose the beauty, sweetness, and fragrancy of the flowers of grace; but not the seeds and root of the heavenly principle.

As it is an enlightening principle. The Christian is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him. The new creation, as well as the old, begins with light. Without light in the mind, there can be no grace in the heart, peace in the conscience, joy in the soul, or holiness in the life. God is light, and believers are the children of light.

As it is a holy principle. God is glorious in holiness, and believers are assimilated to the Divine likeness in moral purity.

August 17.

THE EVIDENCES OF THE DIVINE PARTICIPATION.

"Partakers of the Divine nature."—2 Pet. i. 4.

Having adverted to the nature, it will be proper to

Inquire into the evidences of such a change. Try yourselves by the following tests. If you are partakers of the Divine nature, *you will love the Divine Being.* The more you increase in your resemblance to God, the greater will be your love to him, and you will show it in many ways; he will be the joy of your hearts, the subject of your thoughts, and the theme of your conversation. *You will imitate the Divine perfections.* David says, "I have set the Lord always before me," that is, as my pattern. We are to endeavor, after a resemblance to his moral perfections, to be holy and merciful. *You will obey the Divine precepts.* Instead of looking on the law of God as an iron chain to fetter you, you will regard it as a golden chain to adorn you; will see your privilege in your duty, and cry with David, "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage." *You will be concerned for the Divine glory.* Identifying yourself with the cause of God, you will seek its promotion and increase in every possible way, and pray that

his "way may be known upon earth, his saving health among all nations." *You will be anxious for Divine manifestations.* These sweet discoveries in faith's estimation will be as promissory notes from the bank of heaven; the earnest of the full payment—as the sudden opening of the heavens, and the letting down of a stream of light, which gilds the darkest cloud beneath. *You will love the Divine family.* You will feel interested in all the saints, as they are partakers of the same divine nature, and bear the likeness of your Father.

CONSIDER THE NECESSITY OF THIS DIVINE RESEMBLANCE. Without it your services are an abomination to God; your pretensions to piety are vain; you cannot enjoy communion with God; you will be excluded from heaven. As we have borne the image of the earthly, may we also bear the image of the heavenly!

August 18.

LIGHT IN DARKNESS.

"When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me."—Micah vii. 8.

HERE is faith's bright picture sketched on the dark ground of trouble, wherein the beautiful colors of Christian assurance are brought out to view. The passage will apply to the experience of the believer. Notice

A DISTRESSING PERIOD. "When I sit in darkness." All the ungodly are in darkness, but the children of light are sometimes called to walk in darkness. When is this the case? There is the darkness of *worldly trials.* There are many painful seasons arising from our connection with the world; the anxiety of business, losses in trade, and a thousand other sources. *Providential bereavements.* How often is the domestic circle broken into by the relentless hand of death! When this is the case, we may be said to sit in darkness. *Mental disquietude.* The Christian sometimes witnesses the dark season of desertion. God hides his face, and withholds the influences of his Spirit; and he cries in sorrow and anguish of soul, "Oh that I knew where I might find him."

A DELIGHTFUL PROMISE. "The Lord shall be a light unto

me." The believer's firmament is never so dark but there are some rays of hope. The relief the Christian anticipates is *suitable in its nature.* God is a light unto us in our seasons of darkness, by comforting us in them, and assuring us of his gracious designs, and a happy issue. His word, his Spirit, and his grace, are a light unto us; a light to direct, to revive, and animate. *Personal in its application.* "To *me.*" What benefit is it to us, to know that he is a light to others if he is not to us? *Certain in its realization.* "The Lord shall be a light unto me." We are assured of it from what God is, what he has said, and what he has done. Let us exercise confidence in the Father of lights, and live in the anticipation of that world, concerning which it is said, "There shall be no night there."

August 19.

WAITING FOR GOD'S SALVATION.

"It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."—Lam. iii. 26.

JEREMIAH wrote this book under peculiar circumstances; in it he bewails the low and depressed state of the Church, and the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldean army. In this passage we have three things:—

THE OBJECT OF PURSUIT. "The salvation of the Lord." This expression as used in Scripture sometimes alludes to temporal deliverances, but is mostly employed in a higher sense, to denote the salvation of the soul. This is an object worthy the pursuit of a rational, accountable, and immortal being. Notice

Its nature. "Salvation." It includes everything that is adapted to the condition and requirements of man, that can possibly conduce to his happiness,—pardon, peace, acceptance with God, conformity to the Divine image, and a full and final possession of everlasting glory.

Its source. "Of the Lord." It is the salvation of man as he is the subject of it, and of God as he is the author and source of it. He announces it in his word, reveals it by his Spirit, and imparts it by his grace.

THE EXERCISE REQUIRED. "Hope and quietly wait." It is

two-fold. *Confident expectation.* It is not a vain hope through merit, but a good hope through grace that inspires the Christian. It is a well-grounded hope, and one that will not make ashamed. *Patient waiting.* To wait quietly is not to wait in idleness, but in the pursuit of various duties. Simeon served God in the temple, while he waited for the consolation of Israel. Job exclaimed, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come."

THE BENEFIT REALIZED. "It is good." It is so in many respects. *Because it tends to God's glory.* We dishonor God when we are impatient, either in the endurance of trials, or in waiting for mercies. *Because it gives composure of mind.* Impatience puts a man out of the possession of himself. Therefore our Lord says, "In patience possess ye your souls." *Because it inspires us with courage.* It enables us to meet trials, encounter difficulties, and engage in duties with Christian fortitude. *Because it will issue in endless happiness.* We shall not hope and wait in vain. The accomplishment of his purposes and promises is certain. This affords every encouragement to the sincere inquirer after salvation, and gives the strongest consolation to the tried Christian.

August 20.

THE MORTALITY OF THE BODY.

"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."—Eccles. xii. 7.

THIS chapter contains a touching and affecting account, in figurative language, of the infirmities of old age; and the young are entreated, from the consideration of these accumulated evils, to seek religion at once, before the intellectual faculties begin to be impaired, and the animal economy is broken up. What a world of wonders is man! To adopt the language of Henry, "a ray of heaven is united to a clod of earth." The words before us lead us to the contemplation of man, both in his body and soul.

THE BODY. Notice

Its earthly nature. "Dust." What a humiliating description of man! not a tall pillar of marble, but a little heap of

dust; how feeble, worthless, and insignificant! The gay and licentious, the lofty and ambitious, are only so many little lumps of proud dust. What folly and madness do they betray whose chief concern is for the body!

Its humiliating origin. "The earth as it was." Gen. ii. 7. Come and look at your origin, and is it possible that pride can find a place in your heart! How wonderful is the mechanism of the human frame! What Divine power and skill are displayed in the beautiful connection of its several parts! The finger of God is here.

Its affecting destiny. It shall return to the earth as it was, because of sin. This destiny is *certain as to the fact of it.* No power or policy can avert the stroke of death, or shut the mouth of the gaping tomb. It is *uncertain as to the period of it.* "Our times are in thy hand." It is *diversified as to the manner of it.* Some return to their mother earth slowly, others more rapidly; some by accident, others by the progress of disease, and others by the infirmities and decay of declining nature. It is *universal, as to the extent of it.* "Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Draw near to the tomb of the proud, ambitious conqueror, who made nations tremble before him. Where is all his pomp and grandeur? where his valor and undaunted bravery now? Ah! frail mortal,

> "A heap of dust alone remains of thee;
> 'Tis all thou art, and all the proud shall be."

How unbecoming is the fear of man! How beautiful is the ornament of humility! God remembers we are dust, though we may not. How great is the evil of sin which brings such a train of evils after it!

> "Spirit, leave thy house of clay;
> Lingering dust, resign thy breath;
> Spirit, cast thy chains away;
> Dust, be thou dissolved in death:"
> Thus the mighty Saviour speaks,
> While the faithful Christian dies;
> Thus the bonds of life he breaks,
> And the ransomed captive flies.

August 21.

THE DESTINY OF THE SOUL.

"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."—Eccles. xii. 7.

Let us now look at the other and more dignified part of man's nature.

The soul. Notice it in three points of view.

Its spiritual essence. It is here called "the spirit." How different is its nature to that of the body! How wonderful are the powers and capacities of the soul! It is the mint where our ideas are coined, and the storehouse where they are laid up for future use. Man is capable of receiving into his mind the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and of holding communion with God. If man were composed of nothing but matter, there could be no association with that Divine Being whose nature is spiritual. What a treasure does man possess in his mind, that is capable of such improvement, cultivation, and intellectual enjoyment! How delightful when it is enlarged and expanded with religion; when all its powers are sanctified to holy ends and purposes!

Its sublime origin. "God who gave it." The soul has been called a spark of the Deity. It is the breath of God. When man was formed, God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul." Whatever powers and faculties the soul possesses, God gave them:—"There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding."

Its solemn destiny. "The Spirit shall return unto God who gave it." Here is a proof of the soul's immortality. The living, thinking, reasoning principle within, cannot become extinct. If the soul were to be annihilated, God would not have endowed it with such powers and capacities; neither would he have sent his Son to redeem it. Even the heathens had their elysium, or scenes of happiness, and places of punishment. It shall return to him as its Creator, and as its Judge, to surrender the final account. How different will be the destinies of the righteous and the wicked! The one shall return with the smiles of joy and peace; the other, with feelings of terror and dismay. The one to be fixed in eternal happiness with God; the other to be driven from the Divine presence, into everlasting woe. With

what serious and solemn feelings ought I to contemplate myself as the possessor of an immortal spirit!

August 22.

NEGATIVE DESCRIPTION OF HEAVEN.

"For the former things are passed away."—Rev. xxi. 4.

John was highly favored of God while in the isle of Patmos; the door of heaven was set ajar, that he might obtain a glimpse of its glories, and catch a sound of its music.

Here is a very short, but expressive description of heaven. Let us illustrate and improve the subject.

Let us illustrate it. What things are passed away in heaven? *The diversified trials of life.* To these, John here alludes, There shall be no more bodily pain, relative anxiety, or mental agony. *The present imperfect state of the Church.* Though here, in the Church of Christ, there is much to rejoice in, there are many imperfections to deplore. But in heaven all shall be harmony, peace, and perfection. *The desolating influence of sin.* Its ravages are seen in a thousand forms; in kingdoms, states, cities, towns, villages, families, and individuals. But in heaven, while there is no sorrow to disturb, there is no sin to defile. *The trophies of death.* Death goes full armed on the wide field of nature, and none can escape his scythe. But *there* shall be no more death. *Every earthly scene.* The world itself shall pass away, and nature sink in ruins. There shall be a new heaven and a new earth.

Let us improve it. If these things are so, then what should be our course of pursuit? *Be resigned under present trials.* They are but momentary in their duration, and light in their nature, compared with the eternal weight of glory you anticipate. *Be moderate in your attachment to present things.* Prefer Jerusalem above your chief joy; let religion be the bright sun, eclipsing with its splendor all the lesser lights that burn around you. *Wait patiently for the solution of mysteries.* When the clock of time has struck its last hour, eternity shall present you with a key to unlock all the hidden treasures of Providence, grace, and glory. *Be prepared for that glorious*

state. When you hear of its joys, inquire how you may inherit them. It is by a personal interest in Christ. How should we rejoice that life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel, and that the earnest and foretaste of them are brought into the heart by the Spirit!

August 23.

JESUS OUR COMMANDER.

"Commander of the people."—Isa. lv. 4.

War is an awful calamity; but there is a spiritual warfare in which we should all do well to engage—war against sin, under the Captain of our salvation. Let us inquire into the nature and duties of the office of a commander, and see how they will apply to Christ. As a Commander

He assembles his soldiers. All the individuals who compose his army are volunteers—none are pressed into his service against their inclination; they are gathered around the standard of the cross, by the preaching of his Gospel, attended with the power of his Spirit. As a Commander

He disciplines them for battle. There are many arts to learn, a regular course of training to go through, before the soldier is fit for service. A soldier's life is neither idle nor easy. The Christian is trained by his Commander for the good warfare. "He teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight." Soldiers are sometimes exercised privately, when they are not engaged in actual conflict, but not so with the Christian. He has enough really to exercise him in engagements with the enemy, without any sham fights. As a Commander

He conducts them to war. He is their Leader, to guide them in their march. But how?

By his word. There are many who would be interested in Christ as a Saviour, but they do not desire him as their Commander. The commander's word is the soldier's law. Is it so with us in reference to Christ's word? Are we ready implicitly to obey?

By his example. He has left us a good pattern. It is recorded of Julius Cæsar, that he never said to his men, go, but

come; he himself led the way. It is so with our Divine Commander. He says, "Follow me."

By his Spirit. The Spirit is given to guide us into all truth, and leads us in the way of duty. As a Commander

He furnishes provisions. "Who goeth to a warfare at his own charges?" Our Commander has supplied us hitherto, to the wonder of his friends, and the confusion of his enemies. Divine supplies are laid up in the inexhaustible fulness of Christ, and dispensed as they are required. As a Commander

He animates them in the conflict. The presence of the general inspires the soldiers with fortitude—they are valiant while they catch his eye, and see him unruffled. The Captain of our salvation emboldens us with his promises. As a Commander

He rewards their labors. Rev. iii. 21. The soldier rejoices when the toil of the conflict is over, and victory is shouted; but what is this to the joys and triumphs of the redeemed above, where the palm of victory is waved, and the conqueror's song is celebrated! How honorable is it to fight under the conduct of such a Commander! Am I a soldier of Christ? If I am, let me go forth, setting up my banner in his name.

August 24.

A BECOMING CONVERSATION.

"Only let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ."—Phil. i. 27.

Paul, in the passage before us, expresses a wish that his labors might not be lost upon the Philippians. In this verse he desires several things on their behalf:—

Consistency. Many designations are given to the Gospel; it is called the wisdom of God in a mystery, the word of truth, the word of God's grace, the truth as it is in Jesus, and the ministration of the Spirit; here it is called the Gospel of Christ. It is so denominated because Christ is the author and substance of it, and because he confirmed it by his miracles, proclaims it by his ministers, and applies it by his Spirit. But our chief business will be to inquire what is involved in having our conversation as becometh the Gospel.

A humble spirit. Humility is an inverted paradoxical ladder, in which he who descends lowest ascends highest—the lowest step of Christian humility is the highest point of Christian eminence.

A cheerful temper. I have seen some, whose piety I would not for a moment doubt, though I question their prudence, who display such moroseness of temper, coldness of manners, and gloom of countenance, that to be in their company is like being suddenly transported to Greenland's icy mountains; they carry with them such a chilling influence, that, instead of recommending religion, they render it uninviting. It is a sentiment much to be admired, that a cheerful piety, like the refreshing rose, sheds a fragrance, peculiarly its own, over our whole conversation, and like that lovely flower, leaves its reviving scent when we are gone.

A holy conversation. The language of Canaan is, to many professors, but a dead one; and they do not seem to desire that it should be a living one, with regard to them. Mr. Hervey resolved never to go into any company where he could not obtain access for his Master.

An exemplary conduct. The word "conversation," as here employed, as well as in some other passages, refers principally to the deportment of the life, and not to the language of the lip. Thus Paul speaks of his "conversation in the Jews' religion;" and Peter of "a conversation honest among the Gentiles," and "a good conversation in Christ." "To him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I show the salvation of God."—Psa. l. 23. It is walking, not talking, that makes the Christian. Talk not of a good life, said one of the heathen philosophers, let your life speak—this is the best eloquence, and calculated to produce the most powerful effects. Therefore, for your own sake, for the honor of religion, the glory of God, the prosperity of the church, and as an example to the world, "Let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ."

So let our lips and lives express
The holy gospel we profess;
So let our works and virtues shine,
To prove the doctrine all divine.

August 25.

CHRISTIAN STEADFASTNESS.

"That ye stand fast."—Phil. i. 27.

This is a very short, but suitable advice; it implies the previous possession of Christian principle, and enjoins on us

Stability. "That ye stand fast;" that is, be fixed, firm, and settled. Matthew Henry observes, our conversation should be as becomes those who believe Gospel truths, submit to Gospel laws, and depend upon Gospel promises; and with an answerable faith, holiness, and comfort. We must stand fast in the things of religion, both as it regards faith and practice. There must be

A firm and unshaken adherence to the truths which the Gospel unfolds. Here the Bible must be our rule—the man of our counsel—the standard of our appeal: our faith does not stand in the wisdom of men. To consult human traditions rather than the divine oracles, would be to prefer the glimmering taper to the meridian sun, the polluted stream to the pure fountain, the feeble intellect of man to the mind and wisdom of God. There must be the foundation of Gospel truth laid in the mind, if we would be built up in our most holy faith. We are to grow in grace and knowledge, and follow on to know the Lord. We may receive accessions to our knowledge, without impairing our stability. What a changeable and vacillating spirit do some individuals betray; first embracing this opinion, and then that notion, like the chameleon, which assumes different colors; they resemble plants whose soil is frequently changed, and are thereby not likely to grow or thrive; they are like vessels in the sea, driven hither and thither by winds, and never making any progress towards the haven. "Unstable as water, they shall not excel." But it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace. There must also be

A diligent and persevering discharge of the duties which the Gospel enjoins. It is possible to have a sound creed, and yet not a sincere heart. Many deny by their life what they affirm with their lips. The duties of religion are various. We are to have our conversation becoming the Gospel in every scene, and on every occasion. Thus the life of the Christian is represented as a walk with God. We must stand fast in our honorable profession, unmoved alike by the smiles or the frowns of a

wicked world; steadfast in a practical regard to the solemn obligations that devolve on us, and unmovable, like the rock in the midst of raging billows and foaming waves. What a mercy that there is One who is willing to impart that strength from on high, by which alone we can stand secure!

August 26.

CHRISTIAN UNITY AND ACTIVITY.

"That ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel."—Phil. i. 27.

Christian love is the golden chain that unites believers to each other; but what a pity the links of this chain are so frequently broken! If, says one, the enemies' watchword is, "Divide and conquer," ours should be, "Union is invincible." We are here exhorted to

Unity. "In one spirit, with one mind."

Christians are one in Christ. They are branches of the same living Vine, members of the same spiritual Head, stones of the same glorious Edifice, and children of the same Divine Parent. It is the same mercy that pities, the same Spirit that calls, the same blood that justifies, the same grace that sanctifies, the same refuge that defends, and the same hope that animates.

They should be of one mind. This is the Divine command, recommended in Scripture, and demanded by our Christian profession. How great are the advantages of the communion of saints! One of the Puritans remarks, It is this that keeps our religion in breath, and without which it will be ready to die.

Activity. "Striving together for the faith of the Gospel." Observe

The object of this strife. "The faith of the Gospel." How insignificant in themselves, and how unworthy of an immortal mind, are those objects for which thousands around us in the world are striving—like the racers in the Grecian games, stretching every nerve, and exerting every power, to obtain a wreath of flowers, which soon faded away. "Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we, an incorruptible."

How magnificent and sublime are the ends proposed to the Christian! "The faith of the Gospel" is identified with our best interests. But

> "A soul immortal, spending all her fires,
> Wasting her strength in strenuous idleness;
> Thrown into tumult, raptured, or alarmed
> At aught this scene can threaten or indulge,
> Resembles ocean into tempest wrought,
> To waft a feather or to drown a fly."

The nature of this strife. It is a holy and honorable conflict, and includes a defence of the doctrines of the Gospel from the corruptions of men—the development of its principles in the Christian character, and the diffusion of its truths in the world. How desirable is it that Christians should unite together in their efforts to spread abroad the knowledge of Christ! What can one soldier do alone? But an army may put the enemy to flight, and keep the country in safety. It is but a small portion of land that one laborer can cultivate; but, by the combined energies of many, how much may be done in the production of the fruits of the earth! The ocean is composed of drops, and small atoms make the lofty mountain.

August 27.

THE BENEFIT OF INTEGRITY.

"The integrity of the upright shall guide them."—Prov. xi. 3.

The verse out of which these words are selected, presents to our view a striking and affecting contrast. Here are two opposite characters, two separate courses, and two different results. While "the integrity of the upright shall guide them, the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them." Notice in the text

The disposition of mind referred to. Integrity. Christians are often spoken of as those that walk uprightly. Integrity is a principle which leads us, with the fullest determination, under all circumstances, and at all hazards, to do that which is right. Observe three things respecting the integrity of the upright. *Its foundation is God's grace.* His people are upright in Christ, from the principles of renewed nature. Integ-

rity forms a part of the character of a good man. *Its rule is God's word.* This is the standard to which we are to appeal in all cases of doubt or difficulty. "To the law and to the testimony." *Its end is God's glory.* This should be like a central sun in the firmament of Christian experience, around which the whole system of duties should revolve. If God's glory is our end, God's favor shall be our reward.

THE BENEFICIAL EFFECTS RESULTING FROM IT. "It shall guide them." Henry observes, "his principles are fixed, his rule is certain, and therefore his way is plain." It shall guide them *in all their decisions.* It shall lead them to adopt and pursue a right and conscientious course. Not to decide in any matter hastily, but after mature deliberation. *In all their duties.* These are many and various, referring to God, to the church, to their families, the neighborhood in which they live, and to society at large. *In all their dangers.* While in the world, we are never free from danger. Dangers lurk on every side; but the integrity of the upright, while it guides, also preserves them. *In the choice of society.* How much of our comfort, usefulness, and respectability, depend on the selection of suitable companions! "He that walketh with the wise shall be wise." *In the arrangement of domestic affairs.* How many suffer in their character, comforts, and reputation, for want of a guide in their temporal concerns! Let me desire above all things to have my heart renewed; and the possession of a Divine principle will always be attended with the pursuit of an upright course.

August 28.

JESUS THE PROPHET.

"Of a truth this is the Prophet."—John vii. 40.

WHILE some treated our Lord as an impostor and deceiver of the people, others acknowledged his Divine credentials, and received him as a true prophet. In contemplating the prophetical character of Christ, let us notice

THE SUBJECTS OF HIS TEACHING. It consisted of several parts. There was

The exposition of the law. He gave to the people the original intent of the lawgiver, in order to prepare their minds

for the better reception of the Gospel. This is a model for all preachers. In the hands of Jesus, says one, the science of morality is simplified and complete; a single prohibition is so planted by him, that, like a piece of ordnance, it may be said to enfilade and sweep a whole territory of sin; nothing can come within its range without challenging its thunder and courting death. *The proclamation of the Gospel.* He came to unfold the riches of Divine grace, as displayed in the recovery of lost and fallen man. *The prediction of future events.* He foretold accurately the destruction of Jerusalem, the dispersion of the Jews, false Christs, his own death and resurrection, and the scattering of his disciples.

The character of his teaching. Observe

Its authority. His hearers were particularly struck with this. "The people were astonished at his doctrine." There was no timidity or hesitation about him. He was not to be diverted from his work by the mistaken kindness of his friends, or intimidated by the threatening of his enemies. He beautifully combined majesty with simplicity, severity with gentleness.

Its efficacy. True, many of his hearers were only enraged and exasperated at him; but others were cut to the heart, and his words, like a two-edged sword, pierced them to the quick.

Its perfection. After the revelation of the Gospel, we are to expect nothing further in reference to the way of salvation. It is the ministration of the Spirit, and Gospel times are "the last times." If there is not enough to make you as wise as angels, there is enough to make you wise unto salvation. If there is not enough to make you wise talkers, there is enough to make you holy livers.

Its confirmation. He proved his doctrine to be Divine by the holiness of his life, the miracles he performed, the fact of his death, and the triumph of his resurrection and ascension. If God has raised up such a prophet, let us submit to his teaching. The best posture in which we can be found, is sitting at the feet of Jesus.

From heaven he came, of heaven he spoke,
To heaven he led his followers' way;
Dark clouds of gloomy night he broke,
Unveiling an immortal day.

August 29.

REASONS OF REJECTING CHRIST.

"And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts."—Matt. viii. 34.

Were we to decide on our Lord's worth and excellences, from the manner in which he was treated in this world, we should form a very incorrect estimate. We have here an account of his visit to the country of the Gergesenes; where he cast out the devils with which two men who met him were possessed, into the herd of swine: verses 32–34. The character given of the Gergesenes presents a true picture of the ungodly. Observe

The reasons why the Saviour is rejected. Many come, as it were, to see Christ in the Gospel, influenced by curiosity or custom, who still reject him, and desire him to depart from them. One reason is

Ignorance. Had the inhabitants of the country our Saviour here visited, known him in his worth and excellency, and the glorious design of his mission, they would have entreated him to stay, rather than have desired him to depart out of their coasts. How often does the veil of prejudice and pride obstruct the vision of his transcendent excellences.

Insensibility. I mean an insensibility of the danger to which they are exposed, and the safety provided in the Gospel. How awful the state, to be "past feeling!" Impenitent sinners resemble Jonah in the storm, sleeping when almost drowning If the sinner were aware of his danger, he would tremble for himself, and the state of his soul.

Selfishness. The Gergesenes estimated the value of their swine more than their souls; so with many, the world is the great object of desire and delight.

Unbelief. This is the deadly nightshade that grows in the polluted soil of the human heart, and while it deepens its roots and spreads its leaves, no plant of grace can thrive there. Beware, then, of rejecting Christ. We never hear that he visited the Gergesenes again! If you will not hear when he speaks, he will not answer when you call.

The Lord Jehovah calls;
Be every ear inclined.

August 30.

RECEPTION OF CHRIST.

"And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts."—Matt. viii. 34.

It is said of Cato, who was Cæsar's bitterest enemy, that when he saw Cæsar prevail, rather than fall into his hands, and stand to his mercy, he laid violent hands on himself, which Cæsar hearing of, passionately exclaimed, "O Cato! why didst thou envy me the honor of saving thy life?" Do not sinners, by their rejection of Christ, act as if they grudged him the honor of saving their souls? Let us contemplate

THE MANNER IN WHICH HE SHOULD BE RECEIVED.

Spiritually. Religion has not done much for you, if it has not altered the tone of your mind, and produced a change in your feelings. The law of God must be transcribed in your hearts, and Christ must be received into your souls.

Joyfully. So did Zaccheus: "he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully." How joyfully does the captive receive his liberty, the miser his gold, the merchant his cargo, the heir his estate, and the prince his crown! and should not the reception of Jesus be connected with joy?

Fully. He must be received in all the offices he holds, in all the relations he sustains, in all the ordinances he enjoins, in all the duties he inculcates, and in all the privileges he imparts.

Speedily. How long has he *stood* knocking at the door of your heart—an attitude that intimates the readiness of his departure if you reject him? Life has been termed the golden seed-time of an immortal year. By receiving Christ, the soil of the heart is softened for the seeds of piety; the germ of grace shall expand till it shall be transplanted into a more congenial clime.

Continually. "To whom *coming* as unto a living stone." There are new discoveries to be made, and fresh supplies to be received. This reception of Christ is in fact the business and blessedness of the Christian's life.

See, dearest Lord, our willing souls
Accept thine offered grace.

August 31.

FORSAKING THE FOOLISH.

"Forsake the foolish, and live."—Prov. ix. 6.

The book of Proverbs contains a vast fund of useful maxims and sententious sayings, easily retained in the memory, and suited to all classes of character. Here is a short, but interesting portion. Observe

The society you are to avoid. "The foolish." The wicked are so called to distinguish them from the righteous, who are designated "wise." Their folly is shown in trifling with the interests of the soul. They act as absurdly as the individual who should bestow all his pains to embellish a casket, while he cared not if the diamond it contained were lost. Their folly is shown in neglecting the means of religious improvement. These are placed within their reach; but they would rather be drowned in perdition than embark in that vessel that is bound for the shores of Canaan, guided by a heavenly Pilot, and wafted by the gales of the Spirit's influences. Their folly is shown in pursuing an ungodly course. The way of transgressors is hard; what, then, will the end be?

The determination you are to make. "Forsake the foolish." We must not choose their company. You may know a man by the society he keeps. It was said of the persecuted apostles, "Being let go, they went to their own company." So it will be with Christians; their lawful avocations in the world are cords that often unite them for a time to the ungodly, but when the business is transacted, being let go, they will go to their own company; and when the silver cord of life shall be broken, and they shall be let go from this world, they shall go to their own company in heaven. Again, with regard to the foolish, we must not imbibe their notions, because these are contrary to Christian principles. We must not imitate their example. Dare to be singular, and come out from among them.

The advantages you shall obtain. "And live." It is often the means of prolonging natural life; for "the wicked shall not live out half his days." It is necessary to the enjoyment of spiritual life—the life of God in the soul; a life of peace, respectability, usefulness, and devotedness to God. It conducts to eternal life. If we forsake not the foolish here, we

must share in their everlasting condemnation. How important is decision of character in religion!

September 1.

THE INSTRUMENT OF REGENERATION.

"Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth."—James i. 18.

These words present before us three things concerning the regeneration of believers. The *fact* of it, they are begotten; the *source* of it, "of *his own will* begat he us;" this excludes human merit, and ascribes our salvation to free and sovereign grace. The *instrument* employed is "the word of truth." This is one of the designations given to the Gospel. Let us consider

The instrument itself. It has many properties.

It is not a natural instrument. It does not operate by any natural efficacy, as food nourishes, as the sun shines, or as the wind blows; if it were thus natural, it could not be of grace: and it could never be employed without its designed effect being produced, as the sun, wherever it shines, imparts light, and sheds its genial influence on those who are beneath its rays.

It is an appointed instrument. Rom. x. 14–17. The waters of the sanctuary run through the channel of the Gospel. Here, in the word of truth, God has fixed his power, that is, here he will exert it; for "it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

It is a necessary instrument. Destitute of divine revelation, what can we know of the character, perfections, and government of God, and of the important duties and final destinies of mankind?

It is but an instrument. The power and efficacy are from God. The word exhibits Christ, the Spirit enables us to receive him; the word shows us his excellence, the Spirit leads us to admire it; the word declares the promises, the Spirit helps us to plead them; the word makes known to us the way, the Spirit enables us to walk in it; the word is the seed of the Spirit, the Spirit is the quickener of the word.

THE MODE OF ITS OPERATION.

It works on the mind by enlightening it. The word of truth is the book out of which we are taught, the Spirit of truth is the teacher who instructs us.

It operates on the conscience by convincing it. It discovers to us the evil of sin, the depravity of our hearts, and the suitableness of Christ. It shows us the rocks, shelves, and quicksands, which endanger the ocean of life, and is a compass to steer us to the haven of rest.

It acts on the soul by converting it. We are said to be sanctified through the truth, born again of the incorruptible seed of the word; it is a hammer that breaks the rocky heart, a sword that pierces the inmost soul, a light that penetrates the darkest mind. May all these important ends be answered in our experience.

September 2.

THE DIGNIFIED APPELLATION OF CHRIST.

"The Lord of glory."—1 Cor. ii. 8.

THIS is spoken of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we may observe it in two things.

HIS ESSENTIAL GODHEAD. "The Lord." This term, given to Christ in the New Testament, is of the same signification as Jehovah in the Old Testament; it intimates that he is self-existent and independent without beginning or ending, and the cause of existence to all creatures. Here we have an unanswerable argument against those who deny Christ to be the Supreme God. We find the same honor and adoration jointly paid both to the Father and the Son, without any distinction or disproportioned respect. Christ is called Lord, because all the blessings of salvation are lodged in him as precious treasures in a storehouse; and because he has authority to confer them on sinners.

HIS DIGNIFIED APPELLATION. "The Lord of glory." Why is he so called?

Because as Mediator he is exalted to a state of unspeakable glory and honor at the Father's right hand. This is the reward of his sufferings and death—"the joy set before him," in the anticipation of which he endured so much.

Because he is the giver of all that glory or excellence which any of his creatures possess. He is so, with regard to the natural, moral, spiritual, and celestial world. The holiness of saints and angels is the brightest ornament and chief excellence of their nature; and from whom do they receive this exalted gift, but from the Lord of glory?

Because his glory is continually being manifested. There is a perpetual emanation of it both in heaven and on earth. In this world the glory of Christ shines immediately through his word as a glass, 2 Cor. iii. 18; but in heaven it shines immediately on the whole of the redeemed, which is the very soul of their happiness, Isa. lx. 19, 20.

Because everything pertaining to him is glorious. His person, perfections, throne, apparel, attendants, and fame, are glorious. What are sparkling gems and diamonds, the starry heavens, or the brilliant sun, compared with the glory of Jesus? We cannot gaze on it without borrowing its splendor; our features are covered with its bright emanations; and then, like one who has looked on the meridian sun, we find a dulness on all surrounding objects.

September 3.

THE RESULTS OF CHRIST'S DEATH.

"The death of the cross."—Phil. ii. 8.

One powerful objection among Jews and infidels against the Christian religion is, that its founder was treated with the greatest contempt while he lived, and was put to the most ignominious death; but this fact, so far from being an argument against the truth and excellence of Christianity, is a strong evidence in favor of it. Had our Saviour died as a prince in his palace, or had he expired as a famous general in the field of battle, at the head of a gallant army, the Christian religion would have wanted one of its leading characteristics; and the wisdom and power of God would have been less visible in gathering the nations to the blessed Shiloh. Let us view

The results of our Saviour's crucifixion. By the death of the cross,

He achieved a complete victory over Satan. The old dragon

and his agents, who were precipitated from the lofty heights of heaven's battlements to the lowest hell, had obtained an almost universal dominion over our lost and ruined world: this evil angel had heard that the Lord of glory was about to invade his dominions, and overthrow his kingdom. Alarmed at the signs of his approach, they made all necessary preparations to repel the attack and maintain their ground. It was a wondrous spectacle to see the despised Galilean turn all the artillery of hell against itself, and through death destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.

He accomplished a perfect salvation for man. A salvation the blessings of which are divine in their origin, inestimable in their sweetness, countless in their number, immutable in their character, free in their bestowment, and holy in their tendency.

He secured the highest glory to God. All the perfections of the Divine character shine with glory and grandeur around the cross. "The light of the sun," says an old divine, "is always the same, but it shines brightest to us at noon: the cross of Christ was the noon-tide of everlasting love, the meridian splendor of eternal mercy; there were many bright manifestations of the same love before, but they were like the light of the morning, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day, and that perfect day was when the Lord of glory hung upon the cross." How happy are those that are interested in the death of Christ!

September 4.

THE CHRISTIAN'S KNOWLEDGE OF HIS CHANGE.

"One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."—John ix. 25.

In the context we have an interesting account of a miracle our Saviour performed, in giving natural sight to a man born blind; but no less a power is exerted on every believer, in the communication of spiritual vision. We may view the text as the Christian's exclamation. It is the language of

Humble confession. "I was blind." Our state by nature is one of mental, moral, and spiritual darkness. Unbelievers are blind with regard to God. What mistaken views have they of the Divine character and government! With regard to

themselves—let me appeal, Christians, to your past condition. You formed a wrong estimate of yourselves; you did not see the evil of sin; you were blind to the value of the soul, and the preciousness of Christ. But let us consider the text as the language of

GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT. "I see." Observe

The objects it includes. What do you see? Things you never witnessed before? sin in its vileness, yourself in your unworthiness, Satan in his craftiness, the heart in its deceitfulness, the world in its emptiness, God in his glory, Christ in his fulness, the Spirit in his operations, the soul in its value, ordinances and providences in their designs, life in its shortness, time in its uncertainty, and eternity in its realities. Hereafter you shall see greater things than these. This is only the commencement, what shall the consummation be!

The effects it produces. There will be an open avowal, as it was in the instance before us: you will, if you are the subjects of this vision, look beyond means and instrumentality to Christ as the Author of it. There will be joy and gratitude, a desire for the increase of knowledge, and sympathy for, and exertions on behalf of those who are spiritually blind.

HOLY CONFIDENCE. "I know." The Christian knows the change he has felt, and this in two ways:—

By his own experience. "He that believeth hath the witness in himself." If we can testify the *fact* of his change, the precise season, means, or manner of it are unimportant. Who knows, says a living writer, precisely when the day begins, or which are the first beams that reach our horizon? Yet one thing we know, the sun is rising, it is dawn, it is day. Who perceived when he first began to live naturally? yet we know we have a being. It is the *reality*, not the *instrumentality*, that most concerns us. But it is known also

From the Spirit's testimony. How delightful is it when this is felt and enjoyed! The subject shows the degradation of human nature, it is a state of blindness; it stamps an importance on means, Jesus spat on the ground, made clay of the spittle, and anointed the eyes of the blind man; and it confirms the Godhead of the Saviour.

To mine illumined eyes display
The glorious truth thy words reveal;
Cause me to run the heavenly way;
Make me delight to do thy will

September 5.

THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST.

"They have crucified the Lord of glory."—1 Cor. ii. 8.

We may from these words notice

The fact of our Saviour's crucifixion. The death of the cross was a violent death. Under the Jewish dispensation, no animal that died of itself was offered in sacrifice to God; so Christ, the great Antitype, died not of disease or of old age, but by the hand of violence, and in the flower of life. He was cut off out of the land of the living. The Rose of Sharon was plucked in its perfection, and the Lily of the Valley was cut down in the midst of its bloom, beauty, and fragrance, that it might be to the Lord for a sweet-smelling savor. Christ died on a cross, to fulfil the types in the Old Testament. As Isaac walked to mount Moriah, with the wood on his shoulders, so the Son of God carried his cross as he went to mount Calvary. Another lively type of the crucifixion of Christ we have in the brazen serpent.

The reasons of our Saviour's crucifixion.

Ignorance. "Had they known it," says the apostle, "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." They were ignorant of the greatness of his character, and the importance of his mission. His glory, though partially concealed by the veil of humanity, was displayed; but their eyes were blinded. Is it not the case now with those who despise the Gospel, and crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh?

Enmity. Why did they transfix the Son of God on the cross? We answer in the language of the apostle, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God."

Unbelief. In the face of all the evidences which our Lord gave of his eternal power and Godhead, they refused to give credence to him, and treated him as a deceiver, who wished to impose upon the credulity of mankind. Though the crucifixion of Christ was the worst act that was ever perpetrated on the theatre of our world, yet it was overruled by the power and wisdom of Jehovah, to bring about the most glorious results.

"Hail! hallowed cross, accursed no more;
Rich tree of life to all our race;
Blest tree of Paradise, which bore
The choicest fruit—the gift of grace."

September 6.

HUMAN MERIT DISCLAIMED.

"And have no confidence in the flesh."—Phil. iii. 3.

The sentiment of the apostle here is simply this—we renounce all dependence upon what we have done, and can do, in performing the righteousness of the law by natural principles, which for their corruption and weakness may be styled flesh. The believer has no confidence

In his external church privileges. Many erroneously imagine that these will entitle them to the favor of God, as they make a distinction between them and others; their baptism, church membership, and admission to the Lord's table, are the grounds of their confidence; but it is not so with the Christian.

In his negative righteousness. That is, a freedom from gross immoralities, which the apostle calls "the corruption that is in the world through lust." Though we live moral lives, and act with such kind and amiable dispositions towards our fellow-creatures, as to gain the good-will and applause of all around us; yet if we have no other foundation on which to build our hopes for eternity, we have no scriptural ground for the hope of salvation.

In his knowledge. In this state of weakness and imperfection, our knowledge is limited, and our views contracted. There is a wide prospect yet unseen, a great space yet undiscovered. No Christian has ever attained to the landmark on which is inscribed "perfect;" and shall we have confidence in our knowledge?

In his duties. Some would make these a ladder by which to ascend to heaven; we are allowed to regard them as a ladder to the cross, and that itself is the only ladder to heaven. We must learn to use religious duties without resting on them: though the dove in the deluge used her wings, yet she did not trust in them, but in the ark; so should we engage in duties, but confide in Jesus alone.

In his graces. These are precious, and render the soul like God; but this gold will not abide the fiery test in the furnace of the law, because at its highest pitch it is, and necessarily must be, attended with numerous imperfections. Is not our faith weak as a bruised reed, and tainted with unbelief? Is not our love

frequently as a smoking flax, ready to be entirely extinguished in oblivion? Are not insincerity and hardness of heart mingled with our repentance? Let us be thankful there is such a foundation on which we may with confidence build, and be ever looking unto Jesus.

September 7.

THE GLORIOUS CHANGE.

"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat."—Rev. vii. 16.

EVERYTHING in nature has its commencement, its progress, and its end. The flower that charms with its beauty, and diffuses its fragrance around, buds, blooms, withers, droops, and dies. The trees of the forest, on whose wide-spreading branches the birds of the air lodge and find shelter, ascend from the ground, establish their roots in the earth, decay, wither, and die. The planets that shine so beautifully in their orbits, and bespangle the firmament with their brightness, go on at the command of the great Creator, but shall one day fall from heaven. The sun, that has for near six thousand years imparted its enlightening and genial influence to our world, shall grow dim with age, and be turned into darkness. The world itself shall come to an end, its fabric shall burst at the sound of the archangel's trumpet. How beautiful was its youth in paradise! how wonderful its maturity at the death of Christ! how bright its evening in the millennial glories of the Redeemer! how tremendous its dissolution when heaven and earth shall pass away! But there is a world of peace, where the principles of corruption and decay are unknown, and of this our text speaks. Contemplate here

A GLORIOUS CHANGE. Heaven is sometimes described negatively, or by what it is not, and at other times positively, or by what it is. The description before us is negative.

Freedom from want. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." What a wonderful change shall be produced on the body at the resurrection! And this must necessarily be the case, or it could not be capacitated for the enjoyment of heaven. Mark the attributes by which the corporeal part of

our nature is distinguished, and the change by which it shall be characterized. "He shall change our vile bodies." The plain and simple meaning of the expression of the text is, that the glorified spirits above shall have all their desires granted, and know no want.

Release from pain. "Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." Doddridge renders this, "Nor shall the scorching rays of the sun fall upon them, nor any other inconvenient and disagreeable heat." There shall be nothing in that world of happiness to deteriorate from the saints' enjoyment. There shall be nothing to hurt or vex the mind, nothing to mar or disturb the peace. Let the inquiry often dwell upon my thoughts, "Who shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord?"

September 8.

PATIENCE IN TRIALS.

"Patient in tribulation."—Rom. xii. 12.

The Church grows by tears, and withers by smiles; God's vine thrives the better for pruning. Queen Elizabeth is reported to have said, the skill of a pilot is best known in a storm, the valor of a soldier in the field of battle, and the worth of a Christian in the time of trial. Let us view

The nature of the Christian's trials. "Tribulation" is often spoken of as his lot in this world; and it is of two descriptions:—

Common. Man is said to be born to trouble as the sparks fly upward; the world is a wilderness of thorns and briers, and not a garden of beautiful flowers.

Peculiar. I mean trials peculiar to, and inseparable from, the Christian life. It is an easy thing to go with the stream of sinful custom and fashion, but to sail against it exposes us to continual opposition.

The manner in which they are to be borne. We must be "patient in tribulation."

How is this patience to be exercised? So as to bear our trials without murmuring; so as not to despair of deliverance; to remember from whom they come, and for what they are de-

signed; and that this has been the common lot of Christ's followers in every age.

What are its advantages? The discovery of sin; the improvement of grace; the manifestation of our sonship; deliverance from the world's condemnation; and preparation for eternal glory. Thus God gives grace in the day of conversion, and tries it in the period of affliction. We are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. By this God separates the sin that he hates from the soul that he loves.

September 9.

UNBELIEF.

"But there are some of you that believe not."—John vi. 64.

The chapter from which these words are selected, contains our Lord's celebrated sermon on himself as the bread of life. This was a doctrine at which the Jews stumbled, because they were destitute of that spiritual perception, by which alone they could discern the beautiful and interesting representation. Let us view

The affecting truth recorded. Who are they that believe not?

Those that discover a spirit of indifference. When the Gospel is not valued above everything else, and its blessings sought after with intense anxiety and earnestness, it is not rightly believed.

Those that live in the neglect of religious duties. There are many duties connected with godliness, in the neglect of which it is impossible for a true believer to live. There are some who habitually absent themselves from the house of God, and yet profess to believe in the truths and doctrines of Christianity; but whatever they may pretend, they are only practical atheists.

Those that yield to despair. The Christain has his doubts and fears; but when there is a constant discrediting of the truth of the Gospel, this is unbelief. We should beware of the two extremes, presumption and despair.—Be not high-minded, but fear.

The reasons that may be assigned.

Insensibility. The man who knows and feels his lost estate, will not be long before he seeks to remedy it. There must be conviction by the law, before there is conversion by the Gospel.

The pride of reason. This made the Greeks count the Gospel foolishness; they could not imagine how there could be a system of religion, without bearing some affinity to the false principles they entertained in their minds. Reason cannot comprehend the unbounded essence of the Deity, no more than a man near the sun could grasp it in his arms; neither can reason understand all the revelation of God, more than an individual can inclose all the beams of the sun in his eye. We have natural proofs of the being of a God, but we have not capacities to comprehend the infinite perfections of his nature. When reason is lost in its upward flight, let faith lay her hand upon Scripture, and say, "Yea, let God be true, and every man a liar."

September 10.

OUR LORD'S APPEAL TO THE DISCIPLES.

"And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing."—Luke xxii. 35.

This appeal was made by Christ immediately after the celebration of the Passover with his disciples. Note

Our Lord's inquiry. Let us view

The commission given. "I sent you." The first propagators of Christianity were sent with no recommendation from the princes and rulers of this world, or authority from the chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees. It was enough that Jesus sent them. Their commission was divine, full, important, honorable, and unlimited. God now sends his ministers.

The condition stated. "Without purse, and scrip, and shoes." Their condition was humble and lowly, and they were taught to have a nobler object of pursuit in view than the accumulation of money, and the adorning of their bodies with fine raiment. Their lowly circumstances led them to a daily dependence on the providential care and undeserved goodness of God.

The question proposed. "Lacked ye anything?" The Al-

mighty said to Moses, "These forty years the Lord thy God hath been with thee; thou hast lacked nothing." Christian, this question is proposed to you. You are in the wilderness; has not God led, fed, and clothed you? Perhaps you have been for many years in the way; have you lacked anything? Has he not given you wisdom, direction, peace, joy, strength, and every needful grace?

The disciples' reply. "And they said, Nothing." They were, doubtless, deprived of many comforts and enjoyments they might otherwise have possessed; but that was nothing. They lacked the kindness, respect, and attentions of the great, but that was nothing; they rejoiced that the poor had the Gospel preached to them. It is a good remark of Gurnall's, Take contentment from godliness, and you take one of the best jewels away she wears in her bosom. Let me learn, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

September 11.

THE PRECIOUSNESS OF FAITH.

"Precious faith."—2 Pet. i. 1.

Our present state of existence excludes from our view the glorious realities of the future world; but the Gospel calls on us to believe, though we see not; and on this ground we establish the necessity of faith. In what respects may it be styled "precious?"

In its nature. The Christian's faith is denominated saving, in opposition to that which is nominal. It is a grace of the Spirit; it is not in our nature to believe we are born with evil hearts of unbelief. It is the mind's persuasion of its wants, and firm reliance on the Saviour's fulness. But it is called precious, not only for the excellency of its nature, but because of

Its scarcity. It is uncommon; how few possess it! Thus it is said in 1 Sam. iii. 1, "The word of the Lord was precious in those days;" that is, it was scarce; "there was no open vision." "Many are called, but few are chosen."

In its source. Three things plainly show the divine origin of faith: the testimony of Scripture; the inefficiency of human power; and the subjects on whom it is wrought. You may

just as well attempt to still the raging of the tempestuous ocean, as by human instrumentality alone, to turn a sinner from the error of his ways.

In its object. It looks to Jesus, and unto them which believe he is precious. Faith is the faculty of vision to the soul; it is the eye that beholds the Saviour. It is like the microscope that distinguishes hidden charms, and presents to our mind those excellences which lie undiscovered to the eye of reason.

In its effects. By faith we are said to be justified and sanctified. It is precious, as it is the bond of our union to Christ. It is the hand that receives, as well as the eye that beholds, the Redeemer. It is precious in the effects it produces, in sorrow and trial; and in the supports it yields in death. Through faith, says one, the world, and all its vanities, like the retiring tide, recede from the heart; while the joys of God's salvation flow in, and fill the soul with substantial and satisfying delights.

September 12.

THE GLORIOUS OBJECT AND OFFICE.

"For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."—Rev. vii. 17.

We have here a glorious object, and a glorious office; let us look at each of them.

A glorious object. "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne." This is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, who is emphatically called "the Lamb of God." He was typified by the lambs that were offered under the Jewish dispensation; thus his atonement was set forth. Look at his exalted station, "in the midst of the throne." This bespeaks his Divinity, he is equal with God; his authority, he is on a *throne*, exalted as a Prince; his pre-eminence, he is in *the midst* of the throne, as the grand object of attraction; drawing every eye, filling every heart, employing every tongue.

A glorious office. It is threefold. What shall Jesus do for his people above?

He shall feed them. He does so now—but how? He

gives his word, his promise, his grace, his providence, yea *himself.* Here he leads them in the green pastures of divine ordinances, and beside the still waters of the sanctuary; but in heaven he shall regale them with the fruits of paradise, and the streams of the crystal river.

He shall lead them. The blessings of grace, as well as the provisions of glory, are often compared to water, streams, rivers, and fountains. Here we have a very expressive description, "Living fountains of waters." This is descriptive of the pure, reviving, and filling nature of the enjoyments of heaven. Jesus is our Leader both in the vale of tears, and on the mount of joy.

He shall comfort them. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." The present state is one of sorrow and tears, but it shall not be so in heaven. The tears of repentance shall be wiped away, for there shall be no more sin; the tears of grief shall be wiped away, for there shall be no more sorrow; the tears of bereavement shall be wiped away, for there shall be no more separation. Is Jesus in the midst of the throne in glory? Then he should be in the midst of my heart, reigning supreme over its powers and passions.

September 13.

THE ENEMY.

"When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."—Isa. lix. 19.

When a nation is invaded by a numerous and powerful enemy, the sound of the trumpet heard, the alarm of war given, and nothing is expected but immediate death or perpetual slavery; how every heart is gladdened, and every eye sparkles with joy, when a mighty and merciful prince comes to their relief with an army of courageous soldiers! The Christian is sometimes placed in similar circumstances, but he has a great and glorious Leader. Observe

The enemy. Who are the enemies of the Church?

Satan. He is the accuser of the brethren, the great adversary of souls. This enemy is always more ready to attack the Christian after he has been admitted into close communion

with God. Thus Peter denied his Lord after he had been celebrating the last supper; and Paul was buffeted after he had been caught up to the third heaven.

Sin. This is the common enemy of all believers. It is a crafty enemy. "The heart is deceitful above all things." It is a covetous enemy. It will not be satisfied with the possession of one faculty of the soul, or one member of the body, but has extended its tyrannical reign over all the members of the one, and all the faculties of the other. It has obscured the understanding, degraded the affections, perverted the will, and filled the heart with enmity against God.

Wicked men. The seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent, have always been at enmity with each other. Abel had a cruel brother Cain, who slew him. Esau was at variance with Jacob. The Israelites were persecuted by the Egyptians. There was Pharaoh with his cruel counsellors; Goliath with his army of Philistines; Sennacherib, king of Assyria, with his blaspheming Rabshakeh. The primitive Christians had their enemies. How much opposition did the apostles meet with in their labors to promote the triumphs of the cross! "Yea, all that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution." What need is there for watchfulness and prayer on the part of the Christian? Let us rejoice in the provisions made for this warfare, and the promises of final success.

September 14.

THE ATTACK.

"When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."—Isa. lix. 19.

WITHOUT any prefatory remarks, we proceed to notice

THE ATTACK. "When the enemy shall come in like a flood." Let us

Explain the metaphor. It implies incursion. The enemy will not stay without the walls of the Church, as in the besieging of a city, but actually enters. Satan comes into the families of Christians, and kindles the fire of strife. He enters the closet, the sanctuary. He comes into the hearts of God's people. It implies multiplicity. A flood of water consists of

many drops. How numerous are the Christian's enemies! The seed of the serpent is more numerous than the seed of the woman. It implies unity. As drops of water in a flood are closely connected together, and run into the same channel, so Satan and his hellish crew are united in their opposition to the Captain of our salvation and his royal army. Whatever jarring and strife exist among the followers of the dragon, yet they are as one man in their opposition to the Church of Christ. We have instances in proof of this, both in sacred and profane history. It implies violence. The waters of a flood are rapid in their motion, and have great strength. Satan is sometimes violent in his attacks on the Christian, so that, if it were possible, he would carry him in the streams of apostasy to the very gulf of perdition. Let us now

Illustrate the truth. When does the enemy come in like a flood? When ignorance abounds in the Church. How many have grown gray under the means of grace, and yet are but children in knowledge! When erroneous doctrines are taught. We talk about the increase of popery in our land, but we have not far to go to hear popish doctrine in protestant assemblies. Where salvation by human merit is taught, there is the essence of popery, and the grand pillar on which the man of sin rests. When infidelity prevails. This is a deadly, poisonous weed, that grows very luxuriant even in favored Britain: may the Lord help his servants in endeavoring to root it up; and on the soil where it has flourished, may there be planted the tree of life, whose wide-spreading leaves shall heal those that have been distempered by it!

September 15.

THE DEFEAT.

"When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."—Isa. lix. 19.

"All harmonious sounds," says Bishop Hall, "are advanced by a silent darkness; and the Gospel never sounds so sweetly as in the night of persecution, or of our own private affliction." The passage before us is an harmonious note struck from the chord of Scripture, which must vibrate

delightfully with every Christian's heart. We proceed to notice

THE DEFEAT. When has the Spirit of the Lord lifted up a standard against the enemy? He did so

At the fall. When the serpent seduced our first parents to sin, the enemy gained ground, and came in like a flood. Then for a moment there was joy in hell; Satan and his crew thought they had baffled the designs of the Almighty, with regard to the universe he had made, and man whom he had created. But this joy was only like a flash of lightning, darting from one part of the firmament to the other, and in a moment lost in darkness; for the light of the glorious Gospel soon broke forth, and a standard was lifted up in the first promise. Surely this came like a thunderbolt on the old dragon, and left him in despair.

At the crucifixion of Christ. The enemy seemed to come far into the Church when they murdered her glorious Head; but through death he destroyed him that had the power of death. Behold the Saviour on the cross, bowing his head, and giving up the ghost,—then the enemy came in like a flood: see him rising from the tomb,—then the Spirit of the Lord lifted up a standard against them.

At the Reformation. What an overwhelming flood was there when Antichrist prevailed! but what a standard did God lift up, when he employed Luther and the glorious company of the Reformers to go forth against the enemy; and when he put it into the hearts of the kings of the earth to cast off their subjection to Romish bondage! The man of sin was in the height of his power, and saying, "I shall never be moved." The noble army of martyrs went forth to battle in God's name, gave the enemy a death-blow, and thus defeated the design of Satan, and saved the Church.

In the experience of every Christian. Can you not refer to times of distress, when God has graciously and wonderfully appeared on your behalf? How often has the standard been raised! Be not afraid of the flood of inward corruption and outward trial. God is on your side.

Trust him, ye saints, in all your ways;
Pour out your hearts before his face;
When helpers fail, and foes invade,
God is our all-sufficient aid.

September 16.

GOD OUR ROCK.

"He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment."—Deut. xxxii. 4.

It is the greatest blessing to possess a right and proper knowledge of God. "This is life eternal." The Almighty is often spoken of in the way of figurative description. He is so in the text. Observe

His CHARACTER. "He is the Rock." What does it denote as applied to God?

His immutability. How firm and unmovable does the rock remain amid the foaming billows! God is immutable in his nature, designs, and purposes, covenant, and promises. "He is the same, and his years cannot fail." Let us build on him, flee to him, and hide in him.

His duration. The existence of man in this world may be compared to the running of the stream; there are continually fresh drops of water, so one generation passeth away, and another cometh; but he is a Rock, firm, immutable, eternal.

His WORK. "His work is perfect." Nothing but perfection can emanate from him. His work of creation is perfect. How fair and beautiful was all nature when it first came from the Creator's hands! He pronounced it to be very good; but the introduction of sin has produced confusion and disorder. His work of providence is perfect. It is a vast machine, every wheel of which is revolving in its proper place, turned by his hand and guided by his eye, although there is many a complex movement we cannot understand. His work of grace is perfect. What lovely harmony appears in human redemption!—the Lord will perfect that which concerns his people.

His WAYS. "For all his ways are judgment." That is, they are in strict accordance with justice. This is the case with regard to *his pardoning believers.* Mercy is not shown at the sacrifice of justice. All his ways with his people are judgment; and ere long they will acknowledge, "Just and right are all thy ways, thou King of Saints." *His punishing sinners.* Those who die impenitent can never charge the Almighty with injustice. Let me earnestly desire an interest in God as my Rock, believe in the perfection of his works, and the justice of all his ways; and, viewing the transitory nature of all earthly objects, exclaim, "The Lord liveth, and blessed be my Rock!"

September 17.

CHRIST'S INTERCESSORY PRAYER.

"These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee."—John xvii. 1.

Our Saviour had now finished his farewell sermon to his disciples, recorded in the preceding three chapters of this Gospel, and to this the evangelist alludes when he says, "These words spake Jesus." The text is a part of Christ's Intercessory Prayer, which may be considered as a standing monument of his affection to the Church, and a pattern of his prevailing intercession in heaven. Observe

The gesture he used. "He lifted up his eyes to Heaven." Gestures are actions suited to the feelings and dispositions of the mind. Our Lord's expression or gesture teaches us three things.

To cultivate reverential feelings. In all our approaches to God, we must remember his greatness, his glory, and his majesty; and contrast with it our own insignificance and unworthiness.

To cherish spiritual desires. Lifting up the eye to God in prayer, intimates the lifting up of the soul to him. Outward expressions will avail nothing where the inward feeling is wanting. The plumage of the eagle serves it both for ornament and flight—strip it of that, and you leave it helpless and deformed, as a reptile of the dust: what wings are to the eagle, prayer is to the Christian; take this from him, and he falls to the ground, unadorned and unsupported.

To seek a heavenly portion. The men of the world look downwards to the earth, because their treasures are there; but grace teaches us to look above this lower world, to renounce all earthly things for our portion.

The prayer he offered. Notice

The object of this prayer. He said, "*Father.*" It was in the capacity of Mediator, our Lord addressed the Father in prayer; and not as God. This intimates no inferiority of person, but of office.

The period of this prayer. "The hour is come." What hour? The time when he was to be delivered into the hands of his enemies; the hour of his passion. We have here a striking proof of the Godhead of Christ. He knew the precise

time of his sufferings drew near, although there was, as yet, no outward appearance of it; he did not now see the soldiers coming to apprehend him; but yet he said, "Father, the hour is come."

September 18.

THE MUTUAL GLORIFICATION.

"These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee."—John xvii. 1.

Let us proceed to consider

The matter of this prayer. "Glorify thy Son." Three ways the Father glorified Christ in reference to his sufferings.

By the support he received in his sufferings. There appeared an angel in the garden of Gethsemane strengthening him. His sinking humanity required something to sustain it amidst his extreme sufferings and agonies.

By the circumstances that attended his sufferings. We read of none who put on sackcloth and mourning at the death of Christ, but the sun did not forget to cover itself with a black robe. The high-priest of Israel rent not his garments for sorrow and anguish, but the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom: the earth quaked, and the rocks rent, so that the centurion cried, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

By the glory that succeeded his sufferings. Thus we read of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. His resurrection and ascension were glorious. The grave could not retain him after the third day; he entered it as an invader. View the ascending Conqueror, when his work was finished, going to take possession of his kingdom, and to receive the joy set before him.

The arguments he employed. There are two.

The arrival of a particular period. "The hour is come." This, says Henry, was the most critical period that ever was since the clock of time was first set a-going. The hour was come when he more especially needed the Father's assistance and acknowledgment.

The securing of the Father's glory. "That thy Son also may glorify thee." There were three ways in which the Son

glorified the Father. As suspended on the cross—as rising from the tomb—and as seated on his throne. Let the glory of God be our end, and the God of glory shall be our portion, and the world of glory our home.

September 19.

CHRIST'S DOMINION OVER ALL FLESH.

"As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him."—John xvii. 2.

These words have an evident reference to the first verse of this chapter, and may be understood in a two-fold sense. First, comparatively; as if our Saviour had said, Give thy Son a glory suitable to the authority and dominion thou hast given him. Secondly, argumentatively; enforcing his former petition, as if he had said, Glorify thy Son because thou hast given him power over all flesh. In this sense, chiefly, we understand the words. Observe

An important trust committed. Power over all flesh. Concerning this dominion of the Saviour, notice

Its universal extent. It is over all mankind, here designated flesh. All power is given him in heaven, and over lost spirits in hell, as well as over the inhabitants of the earth; but men are particularly alluded to here, as he came to sanctify and save such, and for this appeared in the likeness of human flesh.

Its acknowledged source. "As *thou* hast given him power." This verse speaks not of Christ's Divine power as God, but his delegated power as Mediator; which is to be considered as the reward of his obedience, sufferings, and death.

A glorious end stated. "That he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him."

The inestimable blessing to be realized. "Eternal life." This includes all the joys and triumphs of heaven. It is a life of perfect peace, holiness, satisfaction, and delight, and is to be enjoyed forever.

The manner in which it is obtained. Christ is said to give it, because his blood gives us a title to it, his Spirit confers a meetness for it, and his Gospel gives us a description of it. He

gives the beginning of it in the work of grace, and the consummation of it in the possession of glory.

The individuals who shall enjoy it. "As many as thou hast given him." Believers were given in the mutual covenant between the Sacred Three; given for the most important end, to be redeemed from evil; given to reward him for his work, and to celebrate his praise.

September 20.

BELIEVERS GIVEN TO CHRIST.

"I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word."—John xvii. 6.

These words are part of a prayer, presented by our great Advocate and High Priest to the Father. The verse now before us contains a fourfold description of the disciples of Christ. Let us contemplate it.

Their relation to God. "Thine they were." They were originally the Father's, in three senses.

As the creatures of his power. God made them. Their being and preservation are derived from him. They were in his hand as clay in the hand of the potter. He had a sovereign right and proprietary in them.

As the prisoners of his justice. By sin we have fallen from our original state of purity and happiness; and as criminals forfeited God's favor, and become obnoxious to his justice. Behold the wonders of God's grace, in making those who might have been the eternal victims of his offended justice, the glorious trophies of his saving mercy.

As the objects of his choice. They were the Father's by electing love; set apart for himself, to receive his grace, and to celebrate his glory. Their names were written from eternity in the Lamb's book of life.

Their donation to Christ. "The men which thou gavest me out of the world." Notice

The grounds of this donation. Why were they given to Christ? As the reward of his mediatorial work—in accordance with the eternal counsels—and as his honor and ornament.

The purposes of this donation. They were given to him, to redeem from sin, to be the subjects of his kingdom, and the partakers of his benefits; to be his offspring, his jewels, to deck his mediatorial crown, and sparkle to his glory, in the full blaze of eternity. If believers are given to Christ out of the world, then they must not be conformed to the world. It is a just remark, that a true Christian living in the world is like a ship sailing on the ocean; it is not the ship being in the water that will sink it, but the water getting into the ship—so, in like manner, the Christian is not ruined by living in the world, but by the world living in him.

September 21.

THE MANIFESTATION OF CHRIST'S NAME.

"I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word."—John xvii. 6.

We have, in the preceding exercise, noticed believers in their relation to God and their donation to Christ; it now remains for us to consider them in their privilege and their practice.

The privilege they possess. "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me." Note

The object. "Thy name." By the name of God, we are to understand his character, perfections, works, counsels of mercy, and will. His name ought to be remembered with reverence, and is calculated to inspire us with joy and gladness.

The act. "I have *manifested*." The name of God is partially manifested in the works of nature, and in the dispensation of providence; but it is more fully and clearly seen in the work of grace. It is savingly manifested to the souls of Christ's followers. We must maintain the grand distinction between the external and internal manifestation of Christ; a distinction which, like a sharp scythe, will cut down many a fair herb, many a beautiful flower in the garden of nature.

The agent. It is Christ's peculiar work to manifest God's name. Ministers may proclaim it, but Christ alone can manifest it. He did it by his personal ministry, when he was on earth; he now does it by the power and influence of his Spirit.

THE PRACTICE THEY PURSUE. "They have kept thy word." By the word of God, we are to understand the divine law, and all the ordinances of his appointment. This implies *the reception of it.* We cannot be said to keep that which we have not previously received. They keep God's word in their mind, and thus retain its truth; they keep it in the heart, and thus experience its influence. *Obedience to it.* They keep it so as to reduce it to practice. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." *Continuance in it.* The disciples had kept God's word pure from the doctrines and commandments of men, and persevered in it; and so must we. Has Jesus manifested God's name to us? Oh! what cause have we for humility, wonder, love, and joy, while we exclaim, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?"

September 22.

THE DARKNESS OF NATURE.

"For ye were sometimes darkness."—Eph. v. 8.

THE verse, a portion of which is selected for our meditation, presents to our view a striking contrast between a state of nature and a state of grace.

A STATE OF NATURE IS A STATE OF DARKNESS. "For ye were sometimes darkness." However awful and affecting this description of human nature, it is universally true. Unbelievers are

In sin, the work of darkness. The man who lives in sin, whatever may be his rank or condition in the world, is living in darkness; his works are works of darkness. He shuns the light, because his deeds are evil. He walks in darkness, and is so infatuated, that he loves the darkness. How strange for men to love that which will end in their ruin, and despise that which would secure their salvation!

Under Satan, the prince of darkness. The world is divided between two potentates; Christ, the Prince of light, and Satan, the prince of darkness. Christ has his throne, and Satan has his; Christ has his subjects, and Satan has his. O how degrading for a rational, intelligent, accountable, immortal being, to

be voluntarily engaged in the service of one who is seeking his eternal ruin!

Beneath God's wrath, the fruit of darkness. "He that believeth not, is condemned already; and the wrath of God abideth on him;" and there it will abide till the light of divine grace dawns on the soul. O awful thought! how many thousands are on the borders of the grave, and yet under the wrath of God!

Exposed to hell, the place of darkness. The regions of the lost are designated "outer darkness." There is the darkness of misery without one particle of happiness—the darkness of despair without one ray of hope—the darkness of sorrow without one glimmer of joy. How thankful should we be for the light of the Gospel—and how anxious to obtain the light of the Spirit!

September 23.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST'S DISCIPLES.

"Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee."—John xvii. 7.

In these words two subjects are presented for our consideration.

The things to which our Saviour refers. What were the things he received from the Father? *Appointment to his office.* He was appointed to fulfil his three-fold office of Prophet, Priest, and King, to remove our ignorance, atone for our sins, and subdue our corruptions. *Qualifications for his work.* See Isa. lxi. 1. The Spirit was not given to him by measure, but descended on him in a copious effusion. *The doctrines he taught.* He said to the Jews, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me:" it was not his in the capacity of Mediator, but it was his as one with God. *The dominion he possessed.* This was from God. The Father is said to give him power over all flesh. But let us now glance at

The knowledge which his disciples attained. They knew these things so as to be fully convinced of his true Messiahship. But how did they know them? *By the innocence of his life.* "He did no sin." His life was a perfect transcript of the Divine law—a personification of virtue—holiness embo-

died and alive. As the sunbeam remains uncontaminated on whatever objects it shines, so did the Sun of righteousness run his course in our world pure and unspotted, though he often came in contact with human impurity and defilement. *By the purity of his doctrine.* It was in accordance with the law of God, that eternal rule of righteousness. *By the miracles he performed.* By these the truth of his doctrine was established: they were his divine credentials. *By spiritual illumination.* When Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus answered, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Thus all believers know Christ, and this spiritual illumination may exist in the minds of those who are fools with regard to human learning. One drop of experimental knowledge is worth an ocean of mere theoretical knowledge. An astronomer was once viewing the heavens with a telescope, and lecturing on some of the planets, when an unlettered clown who was present said to his companion, "Let him spy what he pleases, we are as near to heaven as he is, with all his glasses;" so may the unlearned Christian say, though he cannot discourse on deep and learned questions.

September 24.

PAUL'S ESTIMATE.

"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ."—Phil. iii. 7.

What an extraordinary character was the Apostle Paul! He was remarkable *before* his conversion, in his malignant efforts against Christ; *in* his conversion, in the wonderful manner in which he was brought to Christ; and *after* his conversion, in his unwearied exertions for Christ. Notice here

His former gain. What things were gain to him? *His early rites.* "Circumcised the eighth day." The Jews attached great importance to this; but the most of them forgot that circumcision was of the heart. *His honorable descent.* "Of the stock of Israel," &c. How often did the Jews cry out, "We be Abraham's seed!" This was having confidence in the flesh. *His extensive learning.* "As touching the law, a Pharisee." He was well versed in the various branches of learning and

knowledge, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. *His party zeal.* "Concerning zeal, persecuting the Church." To what awful lengths did his blind, misguided zeal carry him! *His self-righteousness.* "Touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." The religion of the Scribes and Pharisees consisted merely in their rigid attention to external forms. Now turn to the other side, and consider

His present estimate. "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." Thus we see Paul, instead of being a loser, was an infinite gainer by the exchange he made. It was "for Christ" he did it. He had an ample, yea, infinite compensation. *He was the subject of more distinguished privileges.* Born again of the Spirit, renovated in his soul, made a child of God, and an heir of glory. *He was honored with a higher relationship.* Descended from the Father of lights; a son of God, adopted into the royal family of heaven. *He was possessed of a more excellent knowledge.* He learned better lessons at the feet of Jesus than he ever did at the feet of Gamaliel: "Yea, doubtless," says he, "and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." *He was zealous in a nobler cause.* The cause of Christ, which is Divine in its origin, glorious in its nature, and triumphant in its issue. He who once breathed out threatenings against it, now breathes love to it. *He was interested in a better righteousness.* The righteousness of Christ, in which the law can find no blemish, and justice no stain. Oh to know Christ so as to rejoice in him, and have no confidence in the flesh! All other systems of happiness are like the moonbeams on the waters, bright, but unsteady; sparkling, but broken, and soon gone; but the Gospel remains like the glorious sun, still shining in his strength, diffusing light and heat.

September 25.

THE CHARACTER OF THE LAW.

"But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully."—1 Tim. i. 8.

Here are two topics worthy of our close attention; one of which we shall consider in this, and the other in the next exercise. Here is

A truth affirmed. "The law is good." It is so.

In its Author. It is framed by Him who is essentially good in his character, perfections, and works. Nothing of a contrary nature could emanate from him who is the source of all perfection, and the fountain of all goodness. There is an authority stamped upon it by the Almighty himself.

In its matter. The things it contains are of no common interest or trivial importance. They are subjects involving our well-being here, and our happiness hereafter. It is a just remark, that, however disputants may marshal one part of Divine truth against another, the glorious doctrines of Christianity, like stones in a compact edifice, are firmly united together—men may disagree in sentiment, but they cannot destroy the unity of the truth.

In its use. It excites and quickens us in duty against our inward corruptions; makes a discovery of the deceitfulness and depravity of the human heart. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." It drives us out of our own pretended righteousness to rest on Christ's atoning sacrifice. "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." This is its end: to lead us to look to Jesus and believe on him, that we may be saved, as the Israelites, stung with the serpent, looked on the brazen serpent erected by Moses, and were healed. How great are our privileges, having both the law and the Gospel! The one to show us our malady, the other to point us to the remedy; the one to alarm, the other to comfort; the one to probe the wound, the other to apply the healing balm.

September 26.

THE PROPER USE OF THE LAW.

"But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully."—1 Tim. i. 8.

We have already noticed the truth affirmed in the text. Let us now allude to

The case supposed. "If a man use it lawfully." This implies the possibility of abuse. For the further elucidation of this passage, let us make two inquiries.

When is it used unlawfully? When it is turned to unprofitable disputes. How much time has been lost in controversy on religious subjects, and how much ill-temper manifested

by those who profess to contend for the Gospel of the meek and lowly Jesus! When it is opposed to Christ. This was the great error of the Jews; they could not look to the end of that which was abolished, because their minds were blinded. In their zeal in defending the outworks of Christianity, how many have lived and died without entering into the building of Christian experience! When justification is taught by it. The Apostle had to contend with false teachers, who propagated this doctrine. This is the inbred canker-worm, that possesses the heart of every man in his natural state. How fearful is this abuse of the law! how dangerous its tendencies and results! It overthrows the very nature of the Gospel, Gal. iii. 18. It discourages the penitent sinner; it prevents him enjoying the blessings of grace; and keeps him in bondage.

When is it used lawfully? When it is regarded as a mirror to discover sin, as a servant to lead us to the Gospel, and as a rule to direct us in duty. In this sense believers are under the law: though liberated from its condemning power, we are not freed from obligation to it. The law sends us to the Gospel for comfort; the Gospel sends us to the law for direction. May we have grace given us to comply with the terms of the Gospel, and obey the dictates of the law! Let us pray that the Spirit may lead us into all truth; that, while the law is written in our hearts, the Gospel may be sweet to our souls.

"My soul, no more attempt to draw
Thy life and comfort from the law;
Fly to the hope the Gospel gives;
The man that trusts the promise lives."

September 27.

THE KINDNESS OF GOD TO MAN.

"What is man that thou art mindful of him?"—Psalm viii. 4.

David uttered these words when he had been contemplating the wisdom and power of God as displayed in the starry heavens. Let us glance at two things here.

The condition of man. View him in his past, present, and future state; or what he was, what he is, and what he shall be. View him

In his past condition. What was he? Created by the Divine Being in his own image, a noble creature, the master-piece of the great Creator. God made man upright, the possessor of innocence, the object of the Divine favor, holding communion with God, the lord of the creation, exercising dominion over all the creatures.

In his present state. What is he? Very different from what he was when he came forth from the hands of his Maker. Here is a dark cloud over a bright scene. The workmanship is marred, the image is defaced. There is no movement for God—all is disorganized, like a broken watch, whose wheels lie scattered here and there, and whose spring ceases to work. Come and drop a tear over the ruins of that which was once so lovely and beautiful. What is man? The dupe of Satan, the servant of sin, the child of hell, a rebel to his God, an enemy to himself, the victim of death; guilty, depraved, fallen, polluted, miserable, and wretched.

In his future destinies. What shall he be? The body shall crumble into dust, and be the food of worms; but the soul, the nobler part, the thinking principle, can never cease to exist: man is destined to live forever. There is the great alternative of endless happiness or woe.

THE KINDNESS OF GOD. "Thou art mindful of him."

All are under the government of his Providence. Thus his kingdom ruleth over all.

Many are under the light of his gospel. Let us be thankful that he is thus mindful of us; and pray that his name may be known upon earth, his saving health among all nations.

Some are the subjects of his grace. Of them he is peculiarly mindful; he was mindful of the min his divine choice, in effectual calling, in their conviction and conversion. He is mindful of them in the communication of his grace, the tokens of his love, and the manifestations of his Spirit. Let us never forget Him who has been so mindful of us.

Lord, what is man, or all his race,
  Who dwells so far below,
That thou shouldst visit him with grace,
  And love his nature so?—

That thine eternal Son should bear
  To take a mortal form,—
Made lower than his angels are,
  To save a dying worm?

September 28.

THE LIGHT OF GRACE.

"But now are ye light in the Lord."—Eph. v. 8.

What an amazing contrast is there between a state of nature and a state of grace! They are described in Scripture by things the most opposite—bondage and liberty; enmity and peace; death and life; light and darkness. For ye were sometime darkness; but now are ye light in the Lord.

A state of grace is a state of light. Here is

The light of knowledge. Ignorance is compared to darkness, and knowledge to light. The Spirit commences his gracious work in the soul by the renewing of the mind. "But *now* are ye light in the Lord;" that is, now you have received Christ, and are made partakers of his grace and Spirit. This knowledge is divine in its source: they are light "in the Lord." It is excellent in its character, progressive in its nature, and delightful in its influence.

The light of holiness. Light is often used as an emblem of purity. God is designated light, in this respect as a God of spotless holiness. Heaven as a holy place is called "the inheritance of the saints in light." The Christian is adorned and enriched with the principles of holiness, and the light shines in his soul with such glorious lustre and transparent splendor, that it sheds abroad its beams in the life.

The light of God's countenance. This intimates the favor of the Almighty. Light and joy are spoken of as synonymous terms. "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." His favor is life, spiritual and eternal, the life of grace and glory. What flashes of light have some eminent saints been favored with, even in the dark valley of death! Such soul-transfigurations, says one, resemble the white wing of the sea-bird, gleaming through the mist and spray, against the storm-cloud, as she veers homeward to her rock: they are like the glory on earth of some ministering cherub, suddenly unveiled in the moment of its return to heaven.

The light of heaven. Heaven is often spoken of as a place of light. Rev. xxi. 23. There will be light without any mixture of darkness—there shall be no light there; the sun shall always be at its noon-tide splendor and glory. May I have the light of knowledge in the head, the light of grace in the heart,

the light of holiness in the life, the light of God's favor in death, and the light of glory in heaven!

September 29.

THE NATURE AND EFFECTS OF PHILIP'S PREACHING.

"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them; and the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake."—Acts viii. 5, 6.

As it is with an arch, the more weight and pressure there is upon it, the firmer it cements and unites together; and as it was with the Israelites, the more they were afflicted the more they grew, so it has been with the Church of God in all ages; Christianity was rocked in the tempest, and cradled in the storm. In the context we have an instance of this, in the persecution that arose about Stephen. Let us make two inquiries from the passage before us.

WHAT IS IT TO PREACH CHRIST! It is to exhibit him as —*The consummation of Jewish types.* The ancient temple with its bleeding victims, smoking incense, and imposing ceremonies, conducted by a succession of the holy priesthood, prefigured the Gospel dispensation, under which was offered one grand atoning sacrifice. *The great and all-sufficient Saviour.* Under this character God promised him, patriarchs saw him, prophets predicted him, types prefigured him, apostles proclaimed him, and we preach him. *The Fountain of life.* From this fountain issue the refreshing streams of spiritual blessings, which impart life to the soul, and joy to the heart. *The Restorer of peace.* This implies that discord once existed: of this, sin was the cause, and Divine anger the effect; but Jesus is our Mediator, who by his blood has ratified peace in heaven, and by his Spirit confers peace on earth. *The Author of salvation.* Salvation is a joyful sound to the ear, and a rich blessing in the soul; we must ever bear in mind that Christ is the object, the Author, and the consummation of it.

HOW SHOULD SUCH PREACHING BE RECEIVED? We are here told that the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake. Here is a pattern for us. The Gospel should be heard with attention, candor, prayer, self-ap-

plication, and a desire to reduce its truths to practice. In a spiritual sense we are to make the sanctuary a house of merchandise; we trade for rich pearls, and we are to attend ordinances as the merchant that sails from port to port, not to see places, but to take in his lading.

September 30.

THE DISINTERESTEDNESS OF PAUL.

"Not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved." 1 Cor. x. 33.

What a striking example of Christian philanthropy we have in the life, labors, privations, and sufferings of Paul! In every view we take of him, we must admire him, whether we consider him as a man, a Christian, a minister, or an apostle. The text shows the spirit he had imbibed.

A noble object avowed. Observe

Its important nature. "That they may be saved." He sought their spiritual more than their temporal welfare; he wished nothing less than their eternal salvation, their deliverance from all evil, and enjoyment of every good. O, how noble was this object! how rational, how desirable, how divine!

Its general extent. "The profit of many." Christian philanthropy knows no bounds, but the extent of human woe. It not only leads to earnest desires and efforts for the salvation of a few, the inmates of a house, or the inhabitants of a neighborhood, but it embraces the whole world in the arms of its affection and desires. The wishes of Paul were like the prayers of the son of Jesse, that the whole earth might be filled with God's glory. "True Christian benevolence," says Wilberforce, "contracts itself to the measure of the smallest, and can expand itself to the amplitude of the largest. It resembles majestic rivers which are poured from an unfailing source; silent and peaceful in their outset, they begin with dispensing beauty and comfort to every cottage by which they pass; in their further progress they fertilize provinces and enrich kingdoms; at length they pour themselves into the ocean, where, changing their names, but not their nature, they visit distant nations and other hemispheres, and spread throughout the world the expansive tide of their benevolence."

SELF-INTEREST DISCLAIMED. "Not seeking mine own profit." We have only to review his life to see the truth of his statement. *He did not seek temporal emolument.* How well could he say, "I seek not yours but you!" Hear him appealing to the elders at Ephesus in his farewell address, Acts xx. 33, 34. *He did not court human applause.* He desired above all things to be great in the sight of the Lord. *He did not consult worldly ease.* He gave up his temporal prospects in life, and was willing to count all things loss for Christ. What have been our sacrifices for Christ? We have a noble example of disinterestedness; let us imitate it.

October 1.

THE NATURE AND DESIGN OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS.

"Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands."—Isa. liii. 10.

WHAT are we to understand by such expressions as these? Is the language applicable to one who was only to teach a system of morals, and die a martyr's death? The doctrine of Christ's substitution is clearly taught us here. Here are four things with respect to the sufferings of Christ; their unparalleled severity, their important design, their high sanction, and their glorious results.

THEIR UNPARALLELED SEVERITY. Many expressions are employed in Scripture to impress this on our minds. There are three in this place; he was bruised, put to grief, and made an offering. Let us divide his sufferings into two classes:—

Mental. How excruciating were these! It is here said, his soul was made an offering for sin. Before he suffered in his body, before he was crowned with thorns, and pierced with nails, he cried out in the garden, "Now is my soul troubled." There are three things we should form adequate ideas of, before we can have any just conception of our Saviour's sufferings—his spotless purity of soul, the accumulated load of guilt he bore, and the mighty pressure of Jehovah's wrath.

Bodily. In reference to his bodily sufferings, it is said he

was wounded, bruised, stricken, smitten, and afflicted. Think of the cruel scourge, the thorny crown, and the accursed tree. He gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair.

THEIR IMPORTANT DESIGN. The end of these sufferings, with regard to the human race, may be summed up in these two things,—

The removal of the greatest evil. That is, sin. He was made an offering for sin. Here is an allusion to the Jewish sacrifices for the expiation of sin. By his cross he has made an end of sin, presented a full and satisfactory atonement for it.

The introduction of the greatest good. That is, salvation. All spiritual blessings come through him. Grace on earth, and glory in heaven. In all the gallery of Scripture painting, says a living author, the great central object, however studded with stars of light, is the Man of sorrows: this circumstance, in connection with our own sins and troubles, will render plaintive the songs of Zion, and cast a melancholy shadowing even over her brightest scenes.

October 2.

THE RESULTS OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS.

"Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."—Isa. liii. 10.

LET us now observe concerning the sufferings of Christ,

THEIR HIGH SANCTION. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him." We shall give four reasons for this.

Because it was in accordance with the Divine appointment. In the counsels of eternity it was agreed that Christ should undertake the work of our salvation. There was no constraint; all was voluntary on his part.

Because it was for the accomplishment of the Divine purposes. The Father felt a pleasure in the fulfilment of the promises and predictions of his word, as well as the purposes of his love, though it was at such a vast expense.

Because it was for the satisfaction of Divine justice. The law of God had been violated, and the justice of God offended, reparation must be made for the one, and satisfaction given to the other. Both are achieved in the atonement of Christ.

Because it was for the display of the Divine attributes. The perfections of God are seen in all his works, but they are manifested in the most glorious manner in the cross of Christ. There is no abrupt edge, no sudden line; it resembles the natural tint of undecomposed sunlight, where all is seen equally and fully. Each Divine attribute shines with equal splendor.

THEIR GLORIOUS RESULTS. Three are here stated:

Length of days. "He shall prolong his days." He was cut off out of the land of the living; but the prophet refers to his life after his resurrection.

A numerous offspring. "He shall see his seed." The word in the Hebrew is plural, "seeds." This intimates the greatness of the number. "A seed shall serve him." He shall always, while the world stands, have a peculiar people in it, to show forth his praises.

Complete success. "And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." Observe the fact implied. Human redemption is the pleasure of the Lord—a work in which God delights. The appointment made. This work is in the Redeemer's hand. The success insured. It shall prosper. May the glorious designs of the Saviour's atonement be accomplished in my heart!

October 3.

GOD OUR LIGHT AND SALVATION.

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?"—Psalm xxvii. 1.

THIS verse is like the bursting forth of the sun amidst dark and watery clouds. David refers to his trials, but expresses his confidence in God. How valuable is religion! As the snowdrop comes amid snow and sleet, appearing as the herald of the rose, and the harbinger of summer, so religion comes amid the blight of affliction to remind us of a perpetual summer, where the sun never retires behind a wintry cloud. Let us contemplate

THE CHARACTER OF GOD. Many encouraging representations are given of him; his characters are suited to our wants—here it is twofold.

He is our light. Our natural state is one of darkness; he gives us light by his word. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." We can have no right and

proper views either of God in his character and government, or of ourselves in our duty and destinies, without the light of revelation. What glorious discoveries it makes! It lights us to the cross, the throne of grace, and heaven. By his Spirit he gives us light. He pours the first ray of light into the mind, and gradually unfolds to our view the rich treasures of truth. He gives us the light of purity, peace, joy, and gladness.

He is our salvation. He is so in two senses, by accomplishing temporal deliverances, and imparting spiritual blessings. He is the salvation of the soul from the commencement to the termination of the work. He is the source, object, author, and end of it. Its device is the result of his wisdom, its accomplishment is the work of his Son, its application is the prerogative of his Spirit; how inestimable its blessings, and how durable its privileges! Who would not cry, "Oh! visit me with thy salvation?"

"Pardon and peace through him abound;
He can the richest blessings give;
Salvation in his name is found—
He bids the dying sinner live."

October 4.

CHRISTIAN CONFIDENCE.

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?"—Psalm xxvii. 1.

True piety elevates its possessor in the scale of being, exalts his feelings, dignifies his character, and sanctifies his heart. It provides for us a suitable relief in every trying state, and enables us to exult in God as the God of our salvation. Let us notice

The confidence of the Christian. "Whom shall I fear?" This is not the language of vain presumption, but the expression of Christian assurance. Whom have we to fear?

God? He is reconciled. The love of God is shed abroad in the believer's heart, and the possession of love softens the feelings of fear; shall we be afraid to approach a reconciled Father?

The law? It is satisfied. Those who are under the bond of the covenant, need not fear the curse of the law; its threatenings are averted, and the curse is turned into a blessing.

Satan? *He is conquered.* He can go no farther than the length of his chain. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

Afflictions? *They are sanctified.* Shall I fear that which comes from my Father who loves me. Shall I fear that which is designed for my good? Shall I fear that which is sent to promote the spiritual benefit of my soul? The diamond of piety never sparkles so brightly as when the Christian is surrounded with the darkness of affliction.

Death? *It is vanquished.* To the believer it is only "the shadow of death:" there is no substantial evil in it,—the shadow of a serpent will not sting; the shadow of a lion will not devour; and the shadow of a sword will not kill. Death is only a dark passage that leads to our Father's house. The unbeliever has everything to fear, God is his enemy, he is under the curse of the law, led captive by the devil, his afflictions are unsanctified, and he is unprepared for death.

"God is my strong salvation;
What foe have I to fear?
In darkness and temptation,
My light, my help is near."

October 5.

THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN JOY.

"These things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves."—John xvii. 13.

In this verse our Lord assigns the reason why he offered up his intercessory prayer in the presence and hearing of his disciples. Our subject is Christian joy. View

Its nature. It is an inward elevation of soul, arising from the lively exercise of faith in God as our eternal portion. Let us look at some of the properties of it.

It is a satisfying joy. David felt it so, and said, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness." All other joy ends in dissatisfaction. "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness."

It is a hidden joy. The subject of it is the hidden man of the heart; its object is an unseen God; its medium an unseen Saviour; its end an unseen glory. Its real nature and delightful influence are unseen to the men of the world.

It is a spiritual joy. It is designated "joy in the Holy Ghost." Everything connected with it is spiritual; and very different from the elevation of the natural feelings.

It is an abiding joy. The sun of carnal mirth shines brightly, with a false light, for a time, but at death, sets in a cloud, and is succeeded by the blackness and darkness of eternal despair; but that of spiritual joy is only irradiated by the darkness of death, and rises in brighter effulgence and unmingled splendor in the day of eternity, never more to be obscured.

It is an unspeakable joy. 1 Pet. i. 8. Personal experience can give the best illustration of it; and it affirms that wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. These periods of joy, says one, are among the brightest spots in our life—they are sparkles which fall from heaven's altar—they are lotus flowers in the wilderness, whose blossom-cups are full of dew—they are birds of paradise, that glance by on starry plume—they are winged honey, carrying only this one sting, that they make everything else tasteless.

"How happy is the Christian's state!
His sins are all forgiven;
A cheering ray confirms the grace,
And lifts his hopes to heaven."

October 6.

THE FULNESS OF CHRISTIAN JOY.

"These things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves."—John xvii. 13.

Let us now proceed to consider

The peculiarity of this joy. "My joy." Why is it called the Saviour's joy? *Because he is the object of it.* Everything connected with him demands our joy;—his person, work, offices, glories, excellences, blessings, and inexhaustible fulness. *Because he is the revealer of it.* He reveals the true nature of joy; unfolds in his Gospel its delightful effects; and points to the source whence alone it can be obtained. *Because he is the purchaser of it.* Sin caused a separation between us and the great spring of joy; Christ by his mediation brings us near

again; "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." *Because he is the giver of it.* He imparts it by his Spirit. Thus, if he reveals it as a Prophet, and purchases it as a Priest, he confers it as a King. *It resembles his own joy.* This is the case in kind, not in degree—Rev. iii. 21. Believers are said to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The fulness of this joy. "These things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves;" that is, I have uttered these petitions in the presence of my disciples, thereby giving them a specimen of my intercession above, that they might possess an abundance of spiritual joy, when they see the deep and lively interest I take in their welfare. Christ's ascension and intercession are calculated to inspire believers with joy. *Because they give assurance of the descent of the Spirit.* The promise of the Spirit is given now, and fulfilled in answer to Christ's intercession. *Because they afford evidence of the completion of salvation.* He arose again for our justification. This proved that justice was satisfied, and the requirements of the law answered. *Because they guarantee our acceptance with God*—Rom. viii. 34. In him and by his powerful advocacy, our persons, services, and prayers are accepted. Should not this fulfil our joy? What cause for joy has the true believer! If he has a false accuser, he has a powerful Intercessor. His joy shall be completely fulfilled in that world where sorrow shall be forever unknown.

October 7.

THE GOSPEL MYSTERY.

"The mystery of the Gospel."—Eph. vi. 19.

Paul, feeling the arduous and trying nature of the sacred office, desired an interest in the prayers of his fellow-Christians, that he might open his mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel. Why is the Gospel called a mystery?

Because it was hid in God before the world began. See Eph. iii. 9. Before the day-spring knew its place, he appointed his only-begotten Son to be the propitiation for the sins of his people. Through intense application and study, many secrets in the world of nature have been discovered; but

it never would have entered into the heart of men or angels, that God should be manifest in the flesh.

BECAUSE, WHEN IT IS REVEALED, MANY OF ITS DOCTRINES ARE INCOMPREHENSIBLE. They must be received in faith, though not comprehended by reason. To make revelation bow to the shrine of reason, would be as preposterous as to make the glorious sun acknowledge his inferiority to a glimmering taper; the vast ocean, its smallness to a drop of water; or the great globe, its insignificance to a grain of sand.

THE GRADUAL REVELATION OF THE GOSPEL IS A MYSTERY. The sun of righteousness arose even in Paradise, but thousands of years elapsed ere it reached its meridian splendor. Shortly after the fall, the Gospel was revealed to Adam, in the first promise; then to Abraham. Jacob, by the light of prophecy, beheld its glory; its nature and excellence were typified in Jewish sacrifices and ceremonies; the long train of prophets testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow; but in the New Testament we have the full blaze of Gospel day.

THE EXTERNAL REVELATION OF THE GOSPEL TO SO FEW OF MANKIND IS A MYSTERY. Before the flood, the revealed will of God was confined to the family of Noah. After that period, the families of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob only, were privileged with it; for hundreds of years it was confined to a little spot in Canaan. "In Judah was God known, his name was great in Israel." At this present time, the generality of mankind are walking in darkness, they have no vision, and where there is no vision the people perish.

THE SAVING REVELATION OF THE GOSPEL TO SO FEW OF MANKIND IS A MYSTERY. Of those who hear, how few know the joyful sound! "Many are called, but few chosen." To some the word preached is a savor of death unto death. Let us be thankful if it has revived our dead souls; and wait for the light of heaven to reveal what is dark on earth.

Not the high seraph's mighty thought,
Who countless years his God has sought,
Such wondrous height or depth can find,
Or fully trace thy boundless mind.

Yet, Lord, thy kindness deigns to show
All that we mortals need to know;
While wisdom, goodness, power divine,
Through all thy works and conduct shine.

October 8.

THE MINISTER'S DUTY.

"Praying for me that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel."—Eph. vi. 19.

How should the mystery of the Gospel be made known?

Fully. We must declare the whole counsel of God. Its leading doctrines must be frequently exhibited; such as the universal depravity of mankind; the love of God as the moving cause of our salvation; the death of Christ as the meritorious cause; and the work of the Spirit as the efficacious cause. The law must be preached subservient to the Gospel. These two, though distinct, are not opposite. They are like the seemingly opposite perfections of their glorious Author, they harmonize in mutual subserviency in the Christian system. The mystery of the Gospel is to be made known

Plainly. It requires all our learning, says Archbishop Usher, to make things plain. Godly simplicity is the alchemy that converts everything it touches into gold. Ministers are compared to flying eagles; but they must not use their wings to fly over the heads of the people. They are ambassadors; but they must not be like foreign ambassadors, who need an interpreter. They are stars to illuminate, not clouds to obscure, the truth. Those who preach, more to display their learning and eloquence, than to exhibit Christ, are like painted glass windows, that prevent the glorious rays of the Sun of righteousness from shining in. Some ministers, says Quesnal, are afraid of being understood by the simple, lest they should not be admired by the learned.

Earnestly. Sometimes the preacher, if he is warm in his subject, is charged with enthusiasm; but if the fire of enthusiasm burns anywhere, it should be in the pulpit. Baxter says, nothing is more indecent than a dead preacher, speaking to dead sinners the living truth of the living God. Bridges remarks of the preaching of Whitefield, it was the expression of his whole soul portrayed in his countenance, the solemnity of address and deep feeling from within, bursting through at every pore, streaming in his eyes, and breathing an energy of love throughout the effusions of his overflowing heart, that convinced the listening throngs that he was not trifling with them.

SERIOUSLY. Everything demands this; the nature of the work, the importance of the message, the scrutinizing eye of our Master, the character of our hearers, the uncertainty of life, and the approach of eternity.

UNIVERSALLY. We are to make known this mystery to all. Some are so narrow and contracted in their range, so sparing in their invitations to sinners, and feel themselves so shackled in the pulpit, as if they were afraid of converting the non-elect.

DEPENDENTLY. The Spirit alone can discover to our minds the mystery of the Gospel; therefore all our efforts must be in a reliance on his aid.

October 9.

THE NATURE OF CONVERSION.

"Conversion."—Acts xv. 3.

THIS word only occurs once in the Volume of Inspiration: the meaning of it is a change or turning from one object to another. Let us contemplate it.

IT IS A REAL CHANGE. The Bible represents it so; believers are said to be "partakers of the Divine nature;" to have the image of God impressed on the soul; to have the law of God engraven on the heart. It is a change from darkness to light, a translation from one kingdom to another.

IT IS A CHANGE OF PRINCIPLE. The principle of the natural man is according to the corrupt spirit and maxims of the world; but that of a godly man is in unison with the Divine oracles, and according to the dictates of an enlightened mind. The believer has a principle of *faith;* this is the immediate source of all spiritual motion: a principle of *love;* this is the charm that allures him, the motive that influences him.

IT IS A CHANGE OF COMFORT AND ENJOYMENT. Every nature has its peculiar delight belonging to it. In the day of conversion, the Spirit gives new principles to the heart, and communicates new comforts at the same time. Righteousness, peace, and joy, are the trinity which make the kingdom of God in the heart.

IT IS A CHANGE OF OPERATIONS. This is external. A holy life and conversation becoming the Gospel of Christ are the

effects of some great cause; and that cause is a principle of spiritual life in the heart, which none but God can bestow. Let us beware of mistaking external reformation for internal renovation. "The one," says a beautiful writer, "is as when the serpent throws off his skin, and yet, in spite of his gay coat, still remains a venomous reptile; the other as when the caterpillar dies, and from its tomb arises a new creature, with beauteous wings, bathing in the light of the sun, and nursed in flowers." It is an awful thought, how many have passed from infancy to childhood, from childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, and from manhood to old age, and are yet in their sins! Changed years with unchanged hearts!

October 10.

THE ENEMIES OF THE CROSS.

"For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things."—Phil. iii. 18, 19.

THERE is no age in which the Church has been free from hypocrites and false professors. Many have endeavored to employ this fact as an argument against religion, but it is just the reverse; for there must be real coin, or the counterfeit never would exist. There were such characters in Paul's time, and he lamented it. Let us notice

THE MATTER OF HIS ADDRESS. It contains an affecting account of inconsistent and seducing professors. They are described in four ways.

Their number. "*Many* walk." How many have the name of Christ on the lips, who have not received his Spirit in their hearts! It becomes us therefore to bring ourselves to the unerring test of God's word, and search our principles, motives, dispositions, and feelings.

Their conduct. It was voluptuous. "Whose God is their belly." It is an awful thing when individuals are more anxious to pamper the body than to feed the soul. Christianity teaches us to let our moderation be known to all men. It was unblushing. "Whose glory is in their shame." Sin debases

and degrades our nature, and impenitent sinners pride themselves in it, instead of being ashamed of it. It was worldly. "Who mind earthly things," that is, whose spirits, thoughts, and desires, are drowned in them, instead of being fixed on more exalted subjects.

Their character. "They are the enemies of the cross of Christ." This description applies to all who are in a natural state, and undecided in religion; for, says the Saviour, "he that is not with me is against me;" enemies to his person, his cause, his word, his cross, and his people. It is an awful truth, that mere negative virtue, and the lifeless form of religion, may be as hurtful to the great interests of mankind as the positive crimes of the wicked. The stagnant pool may be as noxious as the bursting torrent.

Their end. "Whose end is destruction." Thus the stream of wickedness runs into the sea of divine wrath. The end of sinners is everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. Let me avoid it and mind heavenly things, that mine may be the path of the just, which is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

October 11.

PAUL'S FAITHFULNESS.

"For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things."—Phil. iii. 18, 19.

Let us contemplate

The manner of Paul's address. Three things are observable in it:—

It was frequent. "I have told you *often*." It is necessary that the truths of the Gospel should be repeated in our hearing over and over again; our memories are so treacherous, and our hearts so deceitful, that there must be line upon line, and precept upon precept. Paul says, in the first verse of this chapter, "To write *the same things* to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe."

It was faithful. "And *now* tell you." Some might disbelieve his testimony, and mock and ridicule the truths he pro-

claimed, but *he must* be faithful in his warnings and admonitions; for he well knew his responsibility as an ambassador of Christ, and that the blood of souls stains deep. Simplicity and fidelity are two essential ingredients in preaching: our language, like a transparent stream, should at once reveal our meaning, and, like the light of the sun, should obtrude itself upon the eyes without any pains to search for it. The rustling of the leaf, says one, can never accomplish that which requires the roar of the thunder.

It was affectionate. "Even *weeping*." I can imagine the aged apostle of the Gentiles, his heart filled with love and compassion for immortal souls, and his mind hurt and wounded with the conduct of these inconsistent professors, weeping over them, like his divine Master, who wept over the city of Jerusalem, which was devoted to destruction. Paul was an affectionate, as well as a faithful preacher, and spake not only with the authority of an apostle, but with the love of a friend, the compassion of a father, and the tenderness of a mother. Cornelius Winter remarks of his friend Whitefield, he hardly ever preached without weeping. He once said in the pulpit, You blame me for weeping, but how can I help it when you will not weep for yourselves? your immortal souls are on the verge of destruction, and, for aught you know, you are hearing your last sermon. Let not the tears of God's servants witness against you at the last day.

October 12.

OUR LORD'S FREEDOM FROM AMBITION.

"When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone."—John vi. 15.

It is a true remark, that men who have destroyed in intention every other part of the temple of truth, have paused when they came to the character of Christ, and turning aside, have desisted for a while from the work of demolition to gaze and bow before it, and have not merely left it standing as a column too majestic, or an altar too holy, for human sacrilege to assail, but have even inscribed their names on its base, and have been heard to burst forth in admiring exclamations, approaching to

love. We have an incident in his life, here briefly noticed, which may afford us some profitable meditation. Observe

OUR SAVIOUR'S KNOWLEDGE OF MANKIND. "*He perceived* that they would come and take him by force to make him a king." As God he possessed a perfect and universal knowledge of the human character in all its depths of deceit and iniquity, John ii. 25. "We know," says Henry, "what is done by men; but Christ knows what is in them." Our intercourse with the world is calculated to render us more cautious and less confiding, but he knew all from the beginning.

OUR SAVIOUR'S FREEDOM FROM AMBITION. When he perceived that the people would honor him and make him a king, what was the course he pursued? Such was his estimate of human applause, such was his freedom from worldly ambition, "that he departed again into a mountain himself alone." Those who wished to force this honor upon our Lord were misguided by a blind zeal; they betrayed total ignorance of the cause of his mission into the world, and the nature of the kingdom he came to establish. Their views were secular, and perhaps selfish. He sought not honor from men.

OUR SAVIOUR'S LOVE OF SOLITUDE. "He departed again into a mountain himself alone." How often we read of his being alone, sometimes spending a whole night in prayer to his Father, after a day of labor and toil! Let us refer to some benefits arising from solitude. It enables us to form correct views of things. If you want to see the vanity of the world, the vileness of sin, the preciousness of Christ, the value of religion, and the realities of eternity in their proper light, look at them not in a crowd, but in your closet, through the shaded arch of solitude. It familiarizes the soul with God and divine things, elevates the mind above the world, prepares for fresh trials and sorrows, and by the Divine blessing meetens us for the heavenly inheritance. Let us seek to be useful, respected, and beloved, rather than applauded and extolled. In a certain sense, the good opinion of men is desirable, for where respect ceases usefulness ends; but let us desire goodness rather than greatness.

"We'd sing the characters he bears,
And all the forms of love he wears,
Exalted on his throne;
In loftiest songs of sweetest praise,
We would, to everlasting days,
Make all his glories known."

October 13.

THE BACKSLIDER'S PRAYER.

"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation."—Psalm li. 12.

THREE things are here mentioned concerning David.

THE ENJOYMENT HE HAD EXPERIENCED. "The joy of thy salvation." Salvation is inseparably connected with joy. This joy is *divine in its source.* It is derived from God, who is the fountain of bliss. Salvation is of the Lord in its device, accomplishment, and application. *Glorious in its object.* "Thy salvation." The Christian rejoices in everything that concerns God, but especially in his salvation; because it includes every spiritual blessing which the soul stands in need of. *Delightful in its effects.* It leads the mind to God, in holy thoughts, desires, and affections; elevates the soul above worldly objects; and humbles the spirit before God.

THE LOSS HE HAD SUSTAINED. This is implied in his praying for a restoration of this joy. It is possible for a Christian to lose his joy in God's salvation. Let us inquire whence this arises. *From neglect of communion with God.* Apostasy, says Henry, begins at the closet door. *From indifference to public ordinances.* It is a bad sign when there is little or no relish for the services of the sanctuary: when this is the case, the soul cannot be in a healthy, prosperous state. *From allowed sin.* It is folly to think of retaining the joy of God's salvation, while we are living in the neglect of any known duty, or the commission of any known sin.

THE DESIRE HE EXPRESSED. He prays for a restoration of joy. Believers from various causes may lose for a time their joy; but, says one, the wind shall not always howl, nor dull eddying vapors float along the sky; the warm sunbeam shall yet break out from behind the cloud; and the flowers which were almost broken in the blast, shall again lift up their heads. God has several ways of restoring his people's joy. He does it by affliction—by his word—by his Spirit—and by leading us afresh to the cross.

"The cross! it takes our guilt away;
It holds the fainting spirit up;
It cheers with hope the gloomy day,
And sweetens every bitter cup."

October 14.

THE AFFECTING TRUTH.

"The world hath hated thom."—John xvii. 14.

Our text presents before us two topics of consideration. It records an affecting truth, and it exposes an awful crime.

It records an affecting truth. That the followers of Christ have in every age been hated by the world. Here let us define the term world. By it, as here used, we are to understand the subjects of Satan's kingdom; four reasons may be given why they are called the world. Because they form the greatest part of the world—because they are governed by the principles of the world—because they pursue the pleasures of the world—and because they have their portion in the world.

The disciples were more peculiarly the objects of the world's hatred, because of the work in which they were engaged, and the doctrines they taught were so opposed to carnal reason. Christians are hated of the world,

Because they are ignorant of their true character. They know not those honors and dignities that are associated with the character of Christians, or they would say, "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."

Because they differ from them in their nature. Believers are the sons of God, born from above; the ungodly are the children of the devil, born from beneath; the one have a heart of stone, the other a heart of flesh.

Because they belong not to their society. "They are not of the world." They are the members of a different family, they serve a different master, are governed by different laws, arrayed in different attire, live on different food, and are journeying to a different country.

Because they pursue not their course. There is the course of the world, and the way of holiness. The wicked are walking in the road to destruction, and think it strange that believers run not with them to the same excess. The Christian may here see what he is to expect in the world—hatred. It is encouraging to reflect on the especial care Christ takes of his own. They are safe, notwithstanding all the rage and malice of their enemies. They shall be preserved from evil, and sustained till their work is done, and their hour is come.

October 15.

THE AWFUL CRIME.

"The world hath hated them."—John xvii. 14.

While this passage records an affecting truth,

It exposes an awful crime. Let us notice four marks belonging to this hatred manifested by the world to believers.

It is an unreasonable hatred. There are no just grounds to call it forth. When Christians act up to the high character they sustain, they are just in their dealings, faithful to their promises, kind in their disposition, patient under sufferings and injuries, the excellent of the earth, and the lights of the world; and yet the world hath hated them!

It is an universal hatred. There are some distinctions, but no exceptions. Some pious individuals, moving in the higher walks of life, are not equally exposed to the effects of the hatred of the ungodly with those who are found in the lower stations in society; yet their hearts are no less filled with enmity against them. A lion retains his ferocious and savage nature, even when he is bound in chains; so the wicked feel hatred in their hearts against Christ's followers, though it is not in the power of their hand to hurt them.

It is a cruel hatred. This is very evident from its effects, when it has been suffered to break out. We should rejoice that in our days outward persecutions are unknown; but little, mean, and petty cruelties are still practised by many who would gladly show it more openly with the scourge, the stake, or the sword, if the laws of our country did not spread their wings to protect us.

It is an implacable hatred. A wicked world continuing such, can no more cease to hate the saints than a ravening wolf can be reconciled to the innocent lamb, or the rapacious raven to the harmless dove. Naturalists inform us that the panther has such an antipathy to man, that it will tear the very picture of a man. So wicked men show their hatred and contempt of God, by persecuting the saints, who are images and representations of Him. Let us admire the watchful care God exercises over his people in the midst of the fury and hatred of their enemies. If there is hatred from the world, let there be love in the Church.

October 16.

CHRIST PRECIOUS.

"Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious."—1 Pet. ii. 7.

How just and striking is the figure which compares the Saviour to a foundation-stone! Everything else is sliding sand and yielding air, a bubble on the wave, an empty show. He is a tried stone, tried in his humiliation by all the vehemence of temptation, and by all the weight of affliction; a corner-stone, that which unites and sustains the edifice, precious to God and to the saints. Let us contemplate in this passage

The glorious Person. It is the Lord Jesus Christ. To attempt an adequate description of his glories and excellences, with the embellishments of human learning, would be to paint the rose, increase the whiteness of the lily, give coloring to the rainbow, or gild the glorious rays of the setting sun. All the beauties of nature, however lovely and varied, are overpowered when contrasted with the charms of Him who is the chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. He is the sacrifice and the priest; he is the way and the intercessor; he is all and in all.

The gracious characters. What a treasure is that faith which discovers so much glory in Christ, while to sense he is only the object of refusal and contempt! True faith believes in the evil of sin, the purity of the law, the fulness of the Gospel, the all-sufficieney of Christ, and the adaptation of the blessings of his salvation.

The interesting fact. To those who believe, Christ is precious. He is so in all he is, all he has, all he has done, and all he requires. Observe *the reasons of it.* They are convinced of their need of him; they see his excellences: feeling their ignorance, they go to him for instruction; mourning over their guilt, they look to him for pardon; seeing their weakness, they apply to him for strength. They are persuaded of their interest in him, in all his works and perfections, offices and administrations, influences and graces. *The evidences of it.* How do they show that he is precious to them? They are fond of his presence, impatient of his absence, and anxiously inquire and seek after him; having once sweetly rested in his smile, they can find the sunbeam nowhere else. Is he precious to me?

October 17.

THE NATURE OF GODLINESS.

"Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation."—1 Tim. iv. 8, 9.

We may notice several things with regard to godliness. Let us

Explain its nature. It includes a saving knowledge of the character of God; it brings us to the light, and informs the judgment while it renovates the heart, making us wise to salvation. It includes a firm reliance on the merits of the Son of God. A true and saving knowledge of God is always associated with implicit faith and entire confidence in Christ. It includes a cheerful obedience to the commands of God. Obedience is the test of love. If our knowledge of God is saving, and our faith in Christ is genuine, then we shall render a cheerful and ready obedience to the Divine commands. It includes a growing conformity to the image of God. A godly man is one who resembles God, and godliness is synonymous with godlikeness. It includes entire consecration to the service of God. We must render to him, not only the service of the lip, and the profession of the life, but the homage of the heart. Let us now

Exhibit its advantages. It is universally profitable; it is so as to temporal things, because it enhances our enjoyment of them; while we are thankful for the gift, we delight in the giver.

It improves the state. Godliness raises its possessor from the lowest degradation to the most exalted honors; it finds him a slave immured in a dungeon, it knocks off his fetters, and pronounces him free; it finds him poor, and confers on him unsearchable riches.

It exalts the feelings. How debased are we by nature! how sensual and grovelling! But godliness produces a delightful change; it refines what is gross, and ennobles what is degrading; so that, instead of licking the dust like the serpent, we soar on high with the eagle towards the sun.

It dignifies the character. Those who are godly are the sons of God; they are the seed which the Lord hath blest, the lights of the world, the salt of the earth. Godliness attaches a dig-

nity to everything it touches; it gives the philosopher true wisdom, makes the man of science a practical man, and the wealthy and influential, liberal and useful to the cause of God; it makes the merchant more anxious to obtain the pearl of great price than temporal gains; it renders the poor man a happy man, and every one that receives it a great man.

October 18.

THE ADVANTAGES OF GODLINESS.

"Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation."—1 Tim. iv. 8, 9.

If we personify godliness, we may represent her as standing with the world beneath her feet, heaven in her eye, a wreath of glory on her brow, and a smile of composure playing on her countenance; length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honor; her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace; she has an anchor for sea, and a shield for land, and she goes forth scattering the choicest blessings on all who honor her. But let us turn from the figure to the fact, and contemplate the pleasures and advantages of true piety.

Enumerate its promises. But how can we do this? Go and stand by a wide flowing river, and number the particles of water that pass in rapid succession along the streams; and if you can do this, then you may be able to enumerate the promises of godliness. They are here divided into two classes.

Present. "Having promise of the life that now is." Believers have a present salvation. How nearly are grace and glory united!—grace is the day-break, glory is the meridian and noon-tide splendor of the sun; grace is the closed bud, glory the open flower; grace is the seed-time, glory the harvest. These two kingdoms are united by so small an isthmus, that he who stands upon the extremest boundary of the kingdom of grace on earth, has almost already set his foot within the kingdom of glory in heaven. The promises are a precious book, written with the finger of God, and every leaf drops honey and myrrh; they are golden vessels, in which are

treasured up the choicest jewels God has to bestow. But the promises are

Future. They regard the life to come. It is a glory yet to be revealed. There are golden harps, but they shall be tuned to his praise; there are never-fading crowns, but they shall be cast at his feet; there are palms of victory, but they shall be waved to his glory. The redeemed above are said to be inheriting the promises. Let us now

ENFORCE ITS CLAIMS. Three are mentioned here.

Its truth. "This is a faithful saying." The evidences of Christianity are strong and undeniable. It is proved externally by signs and wonders, prophecies and miracles; and internally by the witness of the Spirit, and the testimony of the Christian's experience. *Its worth.* It is worthy; worthy of your thoughts and desires; worth praying for, and worth receiving. It is heaven's greatest mercy and God's richest gift. *Its universal fitness.* "Worthy of all acceptation." Its blessings and enjoyments are adapted to the nature, capacities, requirements, and immortality of the soul. The form of godliness will no more profit than painted fire will warm: let us, therefore, seek its vital power, that we may enjoy its inestimable privileges.

October 19.

PETER'S WARNING.

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me."—Luke xxii. 31–34.

How faithful is the pen of inspiration!—here Truth, with impartial hand, dips her pencil, now in brighter, now in darker colors, and thus draws her characters to the very life. We have now to contemplate Peter's fall. Consider

HIS WARNING. It was given at a solemn period; after the celebration of the Paschal Supper. Some deny the being of Satan; but he is here spoken of as a person, see Job i. and Zech. iii. 1. He is the Christian's grand adversary. He desires to sift us as wheat, and by his temptations to draw us into sin,

that we may fall as victims to his malice, that he may shake our faith, disturb our peace, and destroy our souls; these are his designs, whether he assumes the form of an angel of light, or a demon of darkness.

His Intercessor. "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Here is *something naturally supposed.* Christ does not intercede that we may not be tempted. He allows it for wise ends, and we have instances of this; Abraham was suffered to utter deceit and falsehood; Moses spake unadvisedly with his lips; Job was tempted to curse God and die. Let no man expect to be free from temptation, but seek sustaining grace. But here is *something expressly stated.* The Saviour intercedes that our faith may not "finally fail:" the Greek word in the original conveys this meaning. Peter's faith did fail, as has been the case with other saints, but not finally. The difference between Peter and Judas was, the one fell for a time; the other never more to rise. How desirable is it to have strong faith, that we may be enabled to quench the fiery darts of Satan; and faith in lively exercise, that we may be a match for his devices! What a powerful Advocate has the believer!—a kind Intercessor, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

October 20.

PETER'S FALL AND RECOVERY.

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me."—Luke xxii. 31–34.

We proceed to remark from these words,

Peter's rashness. "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both to prison and to death." Two things Peter seemed to forget; *the power of temptation.* We are little aware in what manner, or from what quarter, temptations may come, and the particular influence they may have on the mind.—When Peter uttered these strong expressions of attachment to our Lord, he knew not how near the tempter was to him. But he forgot *his own weakness.* "Lord, I am ready to go with thee into prison

and to death." Yes, Peter, but are you able? have you counted the cost? have you weighed the matter, and thought of the peculiar grace that is requisite to support the mind of a martyr? How little do we know of ourselves and our own weakness, till some circumstances occur to try us, and our faith is called into exercise!

His FALL. This is intimated in the words of our Lord, in the 34th verse; that Peter should deny him before the dawning of the day: but he could not believe it. Deny thee, he was ready to say, Oh how ungrateful should I be, if I should thus act! What! after all the kindness thou hast shown me, and all the professions of attachment I have made! no, my Master, "though all shall be offended at thee, yet will not I." But hark! Judas comes at the head of a multitude with swords and staves to take Jesus; the hour and power of darkness is come. Peter appears very valiant for a time, and begins to fight for his Master, and cut off the right ear of one of the high priest's servants. Soon he follows afar off, and at length is ashamed of his Master, and denies him with oaths and curses. Lord, what is man! But observe

His RECOVERY. This is intimated in the words, "When thou art converted," or restored. We are told that the Lord turned and looked upon Peter—what a look it was! it was a look of reproach that pierced him to the heart, a look of remembrance that brought past scenes to his memory, a look of affection that won his soul, the look of Omniscience that penetrated his mind; it was an expressive and forcible look, that seemed to say, What, Peter, is this thy kind return for all my favors? Is this the result of all your strong professions?

His DUTY. "Strengthen thy brethren." The people of God, who have fallen into sin, when they are again restored to him from whom they have wandered, feel anxious to publish abroad more than ever the Divine mercy and forgiveness. This was the case with David. "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." Peter's fall should be regarded by us, not as an example for our imitation, but a beacon for our warning.

"O Lord! thy heavenly grace impart,
And fix my frail, inconstant heart;
Henceforth my chief desire shall be
To dedicate myself to thee."

October 21.

GOD REASONING WITH MAN.

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."—Isa. i. 18.

The most encouraging promises and invitations are beautifully blended with the predictions of the prophets. These delightful expressions, that were so eminently calculated to inspire the ancient Israelites with the liveliest emotions of joy, form the source of our consolation and the ground of our hope. This chapter commences with a gloomy account of human depravity; but ere it concludes, we have a bright prospect of Divine mercy. These words lead us to remark, that

Our state is one of distance from God. Therefore the Almighty says, "Come." How early is our alienation from God manifested! Who can doubt this fact? Heathens acknowledged it. Plato said, no man is born without sin; Cicero and other heathen philosophers have expressed themselves in a similar way. Revelation asserts it, reason confirms it, experience testifies it, redemption illustrates it, the believer confesses and laments it too.

Our sins are of an aggravated nature. "As scarlet, and red like crimson." Twice dyed, original and actual transgressions. Six crimes are mentioned in the preceding verses; ingratitude, ignorance, thoughtlessness, apostasy, defilement, and hypocrisy.

Grace effects a change. This change is wonderful in its nature; it is called a new creation; there is in conversion a reimpression of the Divine image on the soul. It is extensive in its latitude; it does not consist in a mere alteration of our views and opinions, but in the renovation of the heart, and the illumination of the mind; it extends to all the faculties of the soul. It is visible in its effects; these are external, though the seat of the change is within.

Religion has reason on its side. The believer can give a good reason for his attachment to God, but the ungodly cannot for their love to the world. God condescends to reason with us! How unreasonable and unrighteous is it, then, for us to despise and reject him!

God is willing to pardon. The whole passage clearly

discovers this. Oh! what amazing condescension for the Almighty to deign to reason with us! His invitations, expostulations, arguments, and promises, show that everything is propitious, all things are ready, and that he is waiting to be gracious.

October 22.

THE DANGER OF TEMPTATION.

"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."—Matt. xxvi. 41.

This was the language of Jesus to three of his disciples, in the garden of Gethsemane; and it is a suitable counsel to all his followers. Observe

The danger to which we are exposed. Entering into temptation. Let us notice

The care that should be taken. We must not cherish the thought of sin; the revolving of it in our mind is the first step in the passage of temptation. We must not expose ourselves to the occasion of sin. When the mind is unoccupied, it is a favorable time for the enemy. It is the sitting, not the flying bird, that is the fowler's mark. We must not parley with sin. Eve was overcome by this. In the hour of temptation, side not with your corruptions, but with your convictions. We must not enter on a course of sin. Approach not the borders of temptation. We should keep at such a distance from breaking the law, that, as the rabbis say, we should not touch even the hedge that guards it.

The reasons why we should evince this care. We will give four. The craft of the enemy. We have a subtle foe to deal with, who assumes a thousand forms to entice and entangle us. The weakness of our hearts. "How weak is thine heart!" says God—Ezek. xvi. 30. How soon are we overcome, and yield to temptation! Our personal comfort. When we turn aside into the way of temptation, how destructive is it to the peace of our minds! The honor of religion. How many, by yielding to the suggestions of the enemy, have brought a disgrace on religion, and caused the way of truth to be evil spoken of! Let us seek help from our Great High Priest, who "in that he

himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted."

October 23.

THE MEANS OF ESCAPING TEMPTATION.

"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."—Matt. xxvi. 41.

HAVING noticed the danger to which we are exposed, viz., entering into temptation, let us now observe

THE MEANS OF ESCAPING IT. The way to avoid the evil is to be found in the pursuit of good. The path of duty is the path of safety. Omissions make way for commissions, and the end of duty is the beginning of sin. There are two particular means here specified, whereby we may be prevented from entering into temptation. Let us look at them.

Watchfulness. Our Lord frequently enjoined this on his followers. It is one of the most important of Christian duties. There are three things implied in it. Apprehension of danger. This feeling must be cherished by the Christian who would not enter into temptation. We are least safe when we feel ourselves most secure. Activity in duty. A vigilant spirit is opposed to one of indolence. It is a lively and wakeful spirit, watching the first motions of the enemy, as David did when Saul cast a javelin at him, to slay him; he escaped the infuriated monarch, not by resistance, but by vigilance—1 Pet. v. 8. Suitableness of preparation. It is of no use watching the approach of the enemy, if we are not armed and ready to meet him. This must be done not in our own strength. Array yourselves in military panoply, and keep yourselves always in a military posture. "Put on the whole armor of God." How many have entered into temptation, being off their guard!

Prayer. This is never out of season, therefore we are enjoined to pray without ceasing. What must we pray for with regard to temptation? For preventing grace to keep us out of temptation. So we are taught in our Lord's prayer, "Lead us not into temptation;" that is, that God would not by his providence open a door of temptation to us. For comforting grace to support us in temptation. Paul prayed for deliverance from his trial; God answered it by insuring suitable

relief in it, "My grace is sufficient." For delivering grace to bring us out of temptation. We must pray, not only that we may be rescued from it, but be the better for it; that when he has tried us we may come forth as gold, that his name may be glorified, our souls benefitted, and his grace magnified.

October 24.

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER AND PRIVILEGE.

"But if any man love God, the same is known of him."—1 Cor. viii. 3.

It has been well remarked, that those spiritual lights have the purest radiance which are the least conscious of their own brightness; and those divine flowers diffuse the sweetest fragrance which make the least display. The higher the Christian rises in self-knowledge, the lower he sinks in his own estimation; "knowledge puffeth up, but charity," or Christian love, "edifieth." In this passage let us notice the character and privilege of a good man.

His CHARACTER. He loves God. Love to the Divine Being is the very essence and principle of true religion. Two things may be observed respecting this love.

Its extent. What does it include? A spiritual apprehension of God. We cannot feel any real regard for an unknown Deity—the choice of him as our portion—a high value and esteem for him—and a strong desire for nearer communion with him.

Its evidences. The possession of this principle will discover itself in various ways; if we possess it, we shall value nothing in comparison with God; we shall hate sin, breathe after holiness, desire to be more conformed to the Divine image, and more devoted to the Divine glory.

His PRIVILEGE. He is known of God. Consider

What it includes. More than a bare knowledge; this of itself is not necessarily a privilege; for in this sense the ungodly are known of him. It involves the Divine recognition, the Divine approval, and the Divine regard.

What it secures. Those who are thus known of God shall have his blessing to sweeten their common mercies, his grace to

soothe their varied sorrows, the participation of his favor, the joys of his salvation, a public recognition at the last day, and a free admittance into the realms of glory. Remember, that knowledge in the head, without grace in the heart, is insufficient to evidence the Christian character.

"Thy favor, Lord, is all I want;
Here would my spirit rest:
Oh! seal the rich, the boundless grant,
And make me fully blest."

October 25.

THE UNIVERSAL DOMINION OF THE SAVIOUR.

"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."—Matt. xxviii. 18.

In prosecuting the march which the Gospel has commenced, says one, it consults the map of the world—as the sun of righteousness ascends in the firmament, our moral horizon enlarges. What encouragement have we in the passage before us to exert ourselves for the spread of the Gospel! Consider

The universal dominion of the Saviour. This is a subject frequently referred to in the Scriptures, and one of paramount importance. Two things are observable here

The extent of this power. "*All* power." Monarchs have power; angels and evil spirits have power, but it is limited, and under certain control. Jesus has *all* power "in heaven." He exercises unlimited dominion over the shining ranks of angels that bow before him, and the glorious army of the redeemed above, who fall prostrate before his spotless throne. He has power to obtain from the court of heaven pardon, peace, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. He has power "in earth." He upholdeth all things by the word of his power; he regulates and governs the affairs of men; he has power to judge and to punish at the last day; he has power in his church, and is the only true Head of it.

The mode by which it is obtained. It is "given." He possesses unlimited power over all, essentially, as God; but the dominion here referred to is that which he has delegated to him as Mediator, by virtue of the office he undertook, and the work he performed—John xvii. 2. As God, his power was by right;

as man, it was given. As God, he said, "I and my Father are one;" as man, he said, "My Father is greater than I." Let my prayer be, Blessed Saviour, exercise thy power over me.

"Thy blessing shall extend;
Thy saving grace appear;
And all, to earth's remotest end,
The Lord our Saviour fear."

October 26.

THE UNLIMITED COMMISSION OF THE GOSPEL.

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."—Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

We have here the Christian minister's directory. See

The unlimited commission of the Gospel.

It is important in its contents. It consists in the communication of instruction. "Teaching them" what glorious truths are to be taught; the ruin and desolation occasioned by sin, and the blessings secured by grace; our duty to God and our neighbor; the all-sufficiency of Christ's merits, and the work of the Spirit. The Bible, and not a human production, is to be our book of reference and appeal. It consists in the administration of an ordinance. "Baptizing them." This is an outward sign of an inward change; by it we are introduced into the visible Church of Christ. While we regard it as of Divine authority, let us beware of attaching too much importance to it.

It is Divine in its origin. It is not the commission of men, but of our Redeemer God. "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." It is at our peril to go farther than the contents of our commission, or to refuse to declare the whole counsel of God. We must not multiply words without cause, which will only tend to hide, or at least impair our meaning, as the fruit is seldom abundant where the foliage is too luxuriant.

It is universal in its extent. "Teach all nations." There is something delightfully encouraging in the contemplation of the universal adaptation of the Gospel and its blessings to the nature, capacities, and requirements of the soul of man. Sin

is a universal malady, and the Gospel proclaims a universal remedy. Paul rejoiced, that, though he was in chains, the word of the Lord was not bound. May it appear that to me is the word of this salvation sent, with Divine power and energy!

"Lord, spread the triumphs of thy grace;
Let truth and righteousness and peace,
In mild and lovely forms, display
The glories of the latter day."

October 27.

THE DELIGHTFUL ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE CHURCH.

"And lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Matt. xxviii. 20.

The presence of God is the spiritual alchemy that turns everything into gold. Brainerd thus advised a candidate for the ministry—the way to enjoy the Divine presence, and be fitted for distinguishing service for God, is to live a life of great devotion, and constant self-dedication to him. We have now to contemplate

The delightful encouragement of the Church. This is derived from the Saviour's promise before us. His essential presence is everywhere, but his especial and gracious presence is with his church and people. View

Its extensive benefits. "I am with you." In our religious engagements and devotional exercises, no matter who are with us, if he is not, there can be no spiritual profit or enjoyment. "I am with you!" this is an antidote against the most distressing fears. This enabled the apostles to rejoice in tribulation, and sing in a prison. My grace shall be with you to cheer you; my Spirit shall be with you to teach you; my arm shall be with you to defend you.

Its constant influence. "Alway;" in all places, at all times, under all circumstances. How much is there to animate those who serve at the altar, as well as those who worship in the temple! Let us be much in prayer, if we would wish to derive spiritual profit. This is the grand secret of Divine success. Dr. Preston observes, "When we would have any great things to

be accomplished, the best policy is to work by an engine which the world sees nothing of."

Its perpetual duration. "Even unto the end of the world." The promise is to all future generations. Surely there is no room for despondency; there is enough to animate the exertions of every Christian society, and every true believer. Let me inquire how have I received my Saviour's instructions? Experimentally and practically? Am I baptized of the Spirit, and do I enjoy his peculiar presence?

October 28.

THE PROFICIENCY OF CHRIST'S DISCIPLES.

"For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me."—John xvii. 8.

THUS spake our Lord of his disciples, in his intercessory prayer. Observe here two things.

THE INSTRUCTIONS OF THE SAVIOUR. "For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me." What words were these? It includes the whole will of God concerning the salvation of sinners.

The word of the Gospel as the promise of salvation. For this end he was born, and came into the world that he might bear witness to the truth; he preached the kingdom of God. How gracious were the words that proceeded from his lips!

The word of the law as the rule of life. Lest any should mistake the end of his mission, he said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." He magnified the law in a perfect obedience to its precepts; let us honor it in a sincere obedience to its commands. These words he gave to the disciples by Divine authority, plainly, faithfully, impartially, and affectionately. Here is a model for a Christian minister, who is to declare the whole counsel of God.

THE PROFICIENCY OF THE DISCIPLES. "And they have received them." Observe here three things.

The reception they gave his doctrine. They received it so as to acknowledge its purity—believe its Divine authority—understand its meaning, and feel its influence.

The assurance they felt of his Godhead. "And have known surely that I came out from thee." That is, they felt a firm persuasion of his being the Son of God, equal with the Father. This term "known surely," distinguishes it from mere speculative knowledge.

The belief they exercised in his Divine mission. "And they have believed that thou didst send me." The other expression had a reference to our Saviour's being the Father's equal; this regards his being the Father's ambassador. They believed that God sent him, though he came into the world not in the pomp and equipage of a prince, but in the form of a servant. What matter of joy is it that such a Redeemer has been sent into our world; that we have the doctrines he taught! But how have we received them?

October 29.

THE PRECIOUSNESS OF THE PROMISES.

"Precious promises."—2 Pet. i. 4.

The promises are the foundation, food, life, and soul of faith. As a promise is of no avail without faith to apply it; so faith is nothing without a promise to lay hold on. The treasure of a mine will never enrich without it is dug; the fragrance of the sweetest flower will never refresh unless it is inhaled; and amid all the consolations of the Gospel, we may go to the grave in despair, if the precious promises are not applied. In what respects are they precious?

In their nature. *They assure us of invaluable things.* Everything that is included in our anticipations, rests on the promises; heaven itself is the enjoyment of the promises. Heaven is the promises unfolded; and the promises are heaven folded. The purposes of God are his concealed promises; and the promises are his revealed purposes. They discover all good things here and hereafter, as the inheritance of believers, and so are justly styled precious. *They stamp a value on our common mercies.* We enjoy much by way of providence, but much more by way of promise, 1 Tim. iv. 8. A small blessing, by way of promise, is worth a thousand by way of provi-

dence. "A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked."

In their freeness. The promises are the discoveries of God's eternal love to his people. These things are freely given to us of God. The wealth of the rich cannot purchase them; the poverty of the indigent is no obstacle in the way of their receiving them.

In their fulness. The promises are the Christian's spiritual treasury—his unsearchable riches. He who can claim the promises as his own must be rich indeed. He has grace in possession, and glory in prospect. How insignificant are all worldly portions when compared with the heavenly inheritance! Let us rejoice in the fulness of the promises; plead the application of them to our own cases, and pray that we may finally inherit them above.

October 30.

THE VARIETY AND EFFECTS OF THE PROMISES.

"Precious promises."—2 Pet. i. 4.

They are precious

In their variety. Diversified as are the circumstances of God's people, there is a promise suited to them all. The promises are so laid, that, like a well-drawn picture, they look on all that look on them with an eye of faith. Are they afflicted? "In all their afflictions he was afflicted." Are they poor? "Seek ye first the *kingdom of God* and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Are they tempted? The "God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Are they groaning under the remains of corruption within? "He will subdue our iniquities." As there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: so it is with the promises, there is a rich and endless variety. In whatever part of the wilderness the Christian is journeying, there is a beautiful cluster of promises to cheer him.

In their certainty. When we have our misgivings, and are tempted to stagger at them, let us pray for grace to be enabled to stand still, that we may see the salvation of the Lord,

and remember the language of Scripture. "Is anything too hard for the Lord? All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."

In their effects. "That by these ye might be partakers of the nature;" not by the Divine communication of the Divine essence, but by the participation of the divine grace. By these we are to "perfect holiness in the fear of God." On the promises our hopes depend, and from them our comforts are derived. They are the wings of prayer; prayer conveys grace from heaven to the soul, and unlocks the treasure of divine mercy. Believers turn the promises into prayers at a throne of grace. The promises encourage us under a sense of our unworthiness, quicken us to greater diligence, and revive the fainting spirit. What God requires of us as a duty, he promises to us as a gift. He commands us to believe in him, he promises to impart faith. He enjoins us to love him, he promises to circumcise our hearts that we may do it; he beseeches us to turn and repent, he gives repentance, and turns us effectually to himself. He calls upon us to pursue a new course, and leave our old ways; he promises to give us a new heart, that we may incline to his laws.

October 31.

THE GRAND THEME OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY.

"Christ is preached."—Phil. i. 18.

What an heroic and undaunted character was Paul! Though surrounded by many that were ashamed of Christ, he maintained the resolution to his dying day, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ." When surrounded by all the licentiousness of Corinth, and exposed to the philosophers at Athens, he said, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." When writing to the Galatians who were lost in Judaism and superstition, he declared his boast was the cross of Christ; when at Philippi among the great and the mighty he exclaimed, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." He refers in the context to the different motives that actuated some to preach the Gospel—verse 15. Christ must be preached

In the glory of his person. How wonderful is the union of two distinct natures in one Divine person! Christ had a nature the same as the Father, and a nature the same as man. He thought it not robbery to be equal with God, though he took on him the form of a servant. He had a nature that gave the law, and a nature that obeyed it. As God he was as high as the Father, as man he was as low as the sinner. Every attribute belonging to the Deity is ascribed to Christ; and every property connected with humanity belonged to him, yet without sin. As God he fed five thousand individuals with a few small loaves and fishes, as man he was hungry; as man he wept over the grave of Lazarus, as God he commanded the dead to come forth; as God he said to the repentant thief on the cross, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise," as man he exclaimed, "I thirst;" as God he said, "I and my Father are one;" as man he said, "My Father is greater than I." It was necessary that he should be God and man in one Divine person; man that he might suffer, and God that he might give efficacy to his sufferings; man that he might bear the Divine wrath, God that he might be sustained under it. This is the Saviour Paul exhibited, and this same Jesus we preach unto you.

November 1.

THE PREACHING OF CHRIST.

"Christ is preached."—Phil. i. 18.

And he is to be regarded, not only in the glory of his person, but

In the execution of his offices. He is the Mediator between God and man. What a glorious work he came to perform! a work involving the glory of God, and the eternal happiness of millions of the human race. He sustains the threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King—he has the wisdom of a Prophet, the sanctity of a Priest, and the power of a King. The clouds of ignorance are chased away by his wisdom—the guilt of sin is expiated by his blood—and the enmity of the heart is subdued by his power. Christ must be preached

In the bestowment of his blessings. These are Divine

the heavenly treasure is deposited. Let us see how the wisdom of God is displayed in Christ.

In obtaining a fit Mediator between God and man. A mediator, or peace maker, is supposed to have a common interest in both parties; and, in effecting a reconciliation, he is to be the impartial judge of the rights or injuries of both. The Son of God, by his incarnation, was perfectly possessed of every requisite qualification, because all Divine and human excellences are united in him. As a Prophet it was necessary that he should be God to reveal the purposes of heaven concerning our salvation—and man, that he might make known the Divine will in a way suited to the human race. As a Priest it was necessary that he should be man, that he might suffer; and God, to give efficacy to his sufferings. As a King, it was necessary he should be God, to subdue our enemies, and man, that his infinite greatness might not overwhelm us with awe. But the wisdom of God is seen

In answering the opposite claims of justice and mercy to the manifestation of the glory of both. Upon the introduction of sin into the world, the glory of God's justice seemed absolutely irreconcilable with the salvation of man. Justice required that "the soul that sinneth should die;" mercy replied, Let the rebel live. The difficulty to all created minds was, how both these perfections might obtain their demands, and be equally glorified. All is accomplished in Christ crucified—the glory of justice shines in the sufferings of the Saviour, and the glory of mercy is displayed in the salvation of the sinner. The wisdom of God appears

In accomplishing the most glorious ends by the most unlikely means. Who would have thought of the cross as the instrument employed for the achievement of such a mighty conquest as the Captain of our salvation obtained? It now forms a connecting link between God and man—a focus to which all the rays of the Divine glory are drawn—a shaded arch through which we see the visions of the Eternal. Let me gaze, and admire, and pray that the Gospel may be made the wisdom of God unto me.

My wisdom, and my guide,
My counsellor, thou art;
O, never let me leave thy side,
Or from thy paths depart.

November 4.

THE ANTICIPATION OF CHRIST'S SUFFERING.

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."—John xii. 32.

What an intimate connection is there between the Old and New Testament! they may be compared to the two cherubims, overshadowing the mercy-seat, face to face. The one is the outline, the other is the filling of it up; the one is the picture, the other the original. Our Lord, in the passage before us, alludes to the brazen serpent which Moses lifted up in the wilderness, and which was a type of Christ. Sin is the malady with which we are infected, Satan is the old serpent with which we are stung, Christ is the brazen serpent lifted up for the healing of the nations, faith is the eye that beholds him. As the Israelites were not healed except they looked on the brazen serpent, so the sinner cannot be saved without the exercise of faith. Let us contemplate the Saviour in

The anticipation of his sufferings.

When he died, he was lifted up. By this the price of salvation was paid. There was something appalling in the manner of crucifixion among the Romans. The individual about to suffer death, had to bear the cross on his shoulders to the place of execution; before the cross was fixed to the ground, his hands and feet, the most sensitive parts of the body, were nailed to it, a hole was previously made in the earth, and the cross was lifted erect, and thrust into it, which caused the most excruciating agony. The Saviour was lifted up as an object of scorn to his enemies, who derided him; an object of pity to his friends who lamented him, and as a sacrifice to offended justice. Now was the Lamb of God led to the great altar of atonement.

When he rose, he was lifted up. By this the deed of salvation was insured. His first lifting up was attended with shame, but the second was connected with honor. It was not possible that he should be holden of the pains of death; for how then could the Divine purposes be accomplished, or the Scripture be fulfilled?

When he is preached, he is lifted up. In this way salvation is proclaimed. This is the great design of the Gospel ministry. Matthew Henry remarks, the Scripture is the circle of faith, around which it walks, and every point of which compass it

touches, yet the centre of it is Christ, that is the polar star on which it rests. We lift him up in his essential glories as God, and in his Mediatorial excellences as man, in the magnitude of his love, the greatness of his work, the suitableness of his salvation, the riches of his mercy, and the splendor of his reign. Let me inquire if the Saviour is exalted in my views and opinions, in my experience and desires, and in my conduct and conversation. In all things he must have the pre-eminence.

November 5.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF CHRIST'S SUCCESS.

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."—John xii. 32.

WHILE the former part of this verse presents the Saviour before us, in the anticipation of his sufferings, the latter part of it exhibits to our view

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF HIS SUCCESS. Observe

The objects regarded. "*Men.*" Why not angels? Here we see the sovereignty of God. "Verily he took not on him," or as the Greek word signifies, he took not hold of "the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." He assumed man's nature, that he might atone for man's sin.

The number included. "*All* men." One nation was to be blest in Abraham; but in his seed, and by virtue of the promised Messiah, all nations were to be blest. "To him," said Jacob, "shall the gathering of the people be." There is no limit to the atonement of Christ, but that which arises from our unbelief; this is the grand impediment that hinders the blessings of salvation from flowing into our souls.

The method employed. He will *draw* all men to him. Though he is a stumbling-stone to some, he is a load-stone to others. We lift up the cross as an ensign for the people, and blow the trumpet of the Gospel, that you may gather around it as a direction; pointing the way to glory, that you may draw near, and pursue the road to a blissful immortality.

The agent specified. "*I* will do it," says our Redeemer. "I once said to myself," says Cecil, "in the foolishness of my heart, what sort of a sermon must that have been, preached by

St. Peter, when three thousand were converted? Such as other sermons, there was nothing in it extraordinary: the effect was not produced by his eloquence, but by the mighty power of God."

The destination mentioned. "*Unto me.*" We are far from Christ by nature, but are brought near to him by grace. We are dead, and are drawn to him as our life; we are condemned, and come to him as the Lord of our righteousness; we are unholy, and acknowledge him as our sanctification. Sinners are drawn to the cross, the closet, the sanctuary, the Lord's table, and finally to heaven itself.

The certainty expressed. "I *will* draw all men unto me." Thus he insures the ultimate success of his cause. The fields are white to harvest, and many a full ripe sheaf is being gathered in; there seems to be a general movement in all parts of the world; multitudes are starting up to catch the healing beams of the Sun of Righteousness—the walls of China have been penetrated, and its inhabitants can read in their own language the wonderful works of God—light is advancing in the eastern Archipelago—the clouds are flying from the South Sea Islands—along the deserts of Africa the Rose of Sharon is seen to bloom—America is advancing in the light of the Lord, and from Christians in various parts of Europe the Gospel is sounding out. The Lord of the vineyard comes out to his laborers, and cries, "Work while it is called to-day. As truly as I live, the whole earth shall be filled with my glory."

November 6.

THE CHRISTIAN DEAD TO SIN.

"Likewise, reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin."—Rom. vi. 11.

What a great difference there is between the man of the world and the Christian! The one is dead to the pleasures of religion and the things of God, but alive to the world and the objects of time; the other is dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God. Let us notice

The Christian's death. "Dead indeed unto sin." He is not dead to the being of sin: it still lives in him, though he cannot live in it. Let us inquire in what sense he is dead to sin. *To the dominion of sin.* "For sin shall not have do-

minion over you," ver. 14. Though it has an existence in the soul, it has not a throne in the heart—it rages, but it does not reign. *To the curse of sin.* To this all are exposed by nature; but, by virtue of his interest in Christ, the believer is delivered from it. *To the destroying power of sin.* Those who are united to Christ are rescued from its calamitous influence, and shall be preserved blameless at his coming. If I am a Christian, sin may disturb, but it cannot destroy me. "The strength of sin is the law; but I am not under the law, but under grace. *To the final doom of sin.* This is felt in the caverns of eternal darkness and despair, by those who die impenitent. But the Christian is delivered from it. How can he perish, when we are assured that "he which hath begun a good work in him, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ!" He may backslide from the ways of religion, but if a true Christian he shall be restored; the light within him may be obscured, but never can be extinguished. "The altar of prayer in his spiritual temple may lie in ruins, and the grass may grow on its steps; yonder holy images may be thrust out, or be scarcely recognized through the fading of their colors; and the poor heart, once so beautifully adorned may be again like a deserted dwelling, where in the desolate chambers only night birds dwell, and wind and weather find on every side free admission; yet the lamp of conviction, "Thou art the Christ," still flickers solitary in the wasted halls over ruin and rubbish. The divine flame of this conviction still remains; that to-day, or to-morrow, sooner or later, it may light back the lost sheep into the arms of its Shepherd."

November 7.

THE CHRISTIAN ALIVE TO GOD.

"But alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."—Rom. vi. 11.

That is a memorable saying of Paul's, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." In one sense the believer is dead, but in another he is alive. Let us now speak of

The Christian's life. Look at

The nature of it. By nature all are dead; sin is the moral murderer of man; it is a death to holiness, happiness, hope,

and heaven. But the Christian is alive. His is a life of righteousness—a life of humility—a life of joy—a mysterious life. "Your life is hid." It is mysterious in its nature, in its commencement, in the means by which it is effected, in the manner in which it is maintained, and in the way by which it is consummated. By what unlikely means does the Almighty sometimes impart this principle of life! Where, inquires one, has he made the regeneration of his chosen entirely dependent on human instrumentality? Lo! in the midst of the desert he often plants with his own hands the loveliest roses; and from the rudest copse we often hear the sweetest notes of the nightingale.

The property ascribed to it. "Alive *unto God.*" We live to good purpose when we live to God; when we are alive to his word, ordinances, ways, and glory. This life is according to the purpose of God, Rom. viii. 29, 30—by the exertion of his omnipotent power—and designed for the promotion of his glory.

The medium of it. "Through Jesus Christ our Lord." He is the procurer of it; "I am come that they might have life." He is the principle of it; he is emphatically designated "our life." He is the pattern of it; believers are only holy and happy as they conform themselves to Christ. He is the glory and crown of it; take Christ away, and you undermine the foundation, and leave the building in ruins. Can we say that he is "our life?"

November 8.

THE GLORY CONFERRED ON BELIEVERS.

"And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one."—John xvii. 22.

The believer may contemplate these words, and see how large his possessions, and how glorious his prospects are; the sinner may read it, and observe how much he loses by being an enemy to the Son of God.

The glory conferred. The glory here spoken of is not that which essentially belongs to Christ; the meaning is, that he has given to his people an interest in that glory which God

gave him as Mediator, as their head and representative. There is in it a resemblance, though not a perfect conformity.

God bestowed on him glorious gifts. The gifts and graces of the Spirit were imparted to him without measure. The same gifts and graces of the Spirit Christ gave to his disciples. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." As the brightness of the sun is reflected in a dew-drop, so the glory of Christ, the Sun of righteousness, beams in the humblest Christian.

God conferred on him glorious titles. He is designated the Prophet, Priest, and King of his Church. Believers are called prophets, because, by divine illumination, they know the will of God; they are made priests unto God, to offer up spiritual sacrifices; they are called kings, because the kingdom of God is within them.

God insured him a glorious conquest. Christ was supported by the Father in the performance of his work; and the Christian derives from the Saviour a sufficiency of grace. Christ obtained a complete victory over all his foes, and his people shall be more than conquerors.

God gave him a glorious resurrection. Death had not long to triumph over his prey; the grave had not long to retain her prisoner. How glorious shall the believer's resurrection be! "He shall change this vile body, and fashion it like unto his own glorious body."

God set before him a glorious reward. He had a glorious kingdom, a glorious sceptre, a glorious throne, and a glorious crown. In these glories, his people will participate. Thus Paul speaks of the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. What advantages do Christians derive by virtue of their interest in Christ? If they suffer with him, they shall be glorified together.

To thee we still would cleave
With ever-growing zeal;
If millions tempt us Christ to leave,
O, let them ne'er prevail.

Since Christ and we are one,
Why should we doubt or fear?
If he in heaven hath fixed his throne,
He'll fix his members there.

November 9.

THE INTERESTING UNION.

"And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one."—John xvii. 22.

HAVING noticed from this verse the glory conferred, we have now to consider

THE DESIGN STATED. "That they may be one, even as we are one." This is a sublime and godlike end indeed. The meaning is, that they may be united in the most beneficial and honorable manner to Christ, and to one another, in resemblance of that infinitely higher union which subsists between the Father and the Son. Observe

The fact of this union. It consists in a joint profession and experience of the truth as it is in Jesus, and a firm and united adherence to all divine ordinances. Truth must be laid as the foundation of unity among Christ's followers; for a union in error and wickedness is but a faction. They are all one in Christ Jesus. It is a pleasing illustration, that the similarity of dew-drops in pureness and beauty, although formed from all the varieties of vapor, is like that uniform spirit which characterizes the diversified classes of mankind, who are brought to believe on Christ for salvation. There is a unity of faith, a unity of principle, a unity of spirit, a unity of affection and desire, a unity of aim and pursuit, and a unity of anticipation. In the world above, this union shall be perfect and complete.

The resemblance of this union. "Even as we are one." These two unions are not alike in all respects. There are three points of resemblance that may be traced. They are the same in their *spirituality.* It is not a union of bodies, but of spirits. Thus we read of the primitive Christians, that they were of one heart and one soul. In their *intimacy.* The union between the Father and the Son is very close, so is that of believers, they are said to be members one of another. In their *duration.* They are both indissoluble. Believers may be divided in judgment and opinion, and separated into sects and parties; but as they are members of the mystical body of Christ, they cannot be cut asunder. This is the design for which Christ has promised such glory to his people, and shall we not put glory on him? Honor him by meditating on his glories, pro-

claiming his excellences, showing forth his praise, and endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

November 10.

THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S INSTRUCTIONS.

"And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."—John xvii. 26.

These are the closing words of our Lord's intercessory prayer. Here is a reference to past instructions given, and future tuition yet to be enjoyed. None ever made such proficiency in the school of Christ on earth, as that he could learn no more. In this passage observe

The nature of our Saviour's instructions.

The subject of his revelation. What did he declare? "Thy name." God has been pleased to ascribe names to himself in Scripture, that some knowledge of his nature and perfections may be conveyed to us. By "his name" here, is particularly meant his will and purpose concerning our salvation, and his grace and mercy therein displayed. Can we imagine anything more important than the truths our Lord came to reveal?

The means by which he imparts it. He revealed God's name when he was upon earth in his own person; but now he is in heaven, he does it by the instrumentality of others. He does it externally by the word. In the Gospel we have the name of God revealed in all its glory and excellency; so plainly, that he who runs may read. Here his name appears as "the sinner's friend, and sin's eternal foe." Internally by his Spirit. The Spirit illumines the mind, takes away the veil of ignorance from the heart, and causes the true light to shine. He is an interpreter; one among a thousand.

The progressive manner in which it is communicated. "And will declare it." This was true of the disciples; by the outpouring of the influences of his Spirit, he taught them much more after he left the world. So he carries on the work of instruction now in the minds of his people. "Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the Lord." Have you learned of him? There are three marks belonging to such: they have been taught the evil of sin in the school of the law, the love of

Christ in the school of the Gospel, and the lesson of patience in the school of affliction.

November 11.

THE DESIGN OF CHRIST'S INSTRUCTIONS.

"And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."—John xvii. 26.

Let us now contemplate

The end for which these instructions were given. It is twofold.

The possession of God's love. There is a resemblance between the Father's love to the Son, and his love to believers. This love must be in us in its effects. Its fruits are felt when we are savingly brought to God in conversion. Then it is in us as a living, influential principle; or, as one has expressed it, like the virtue which the loadstone gives to the needle, inclining it to move towards the pole; it draws out the soul toward God in pious and devout affections. In its experience. I mean, when we have such a sense and feeling of it, that we are assured that it is shed abroad in our hearts, and that we are the objects of the Divine favor. The love of God in us, as to its effects, is like ointment shut up in a box; but in its enjoyment and assurance, it is like ointment poured forth. The safety of a Christian consists in the fact that God loves him, and has forgiven his sins; but his comfort arises from the sensible apprehension and feeling of it.

The indwelling of Christ. "And I in them." This we are to understand of the mystical union which exists between Christ and his people. How does Christ dwell in us? By his Spirit. He dwells in us as a Comforter, Teacher, Guide, Witness, and Advocate. By his word. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." This word dwells in us richly when it is carefully studied, firmly believed, prayerfully read, closely applied, and conscientiously practised. By faith. The apostle prays for the Ephesians, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." If Christ is such a blessed inhabitant, let us open our hearts to receive him. He brings salvation with him.

November 12.

GOD THE BELIEVER'S PORTION.

"The Lord is my portion, saith my soul."—Lam. iii. 24.

Jeremiah was peculiarly situated when he penned this book. He lived in the time of the Babylonish captivity, and was an eye-witness to the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem. After he beheld these distressing scenes, he sat down and wrote the book of Lamentations. In the storm of judgment, he had the sunshine of mercy. Consider

The nature of the believer's portion.

It is a present portion. There are many who are looking forward to future possessions they expect to enjoy at the death of others, but the individual who has God has obtained a present portion. Religion not only secures to us future happiness, but present comforts; yet how few seek it! how many say, It is too soon to be religious! On what mode of reasoning do you delay? Because you are young? Don't the young die? Because you are possessed of health? How many a blooming flower has been suddenly cut down by the scythe of death! We never hear individuals say, It is too soon to get rich. The sick man does not say, It is too soon to seek health; or the destitute, It is too soon to obtain relief; but such is the treachery of the human heart, that man says, It is too soon to seek religion.

It is a suitable portion. The world is not. An individual may possess riches, but it is grace he wants; he may have elevation, but it is humility he wants; he may have friends, but it is Christ he wants, the friend that sticketh closer than a brother. What will suit us amid the trying scenes of life, and in the solemn hour of death, but this portion?

It is a sufficient portion. There is enough in God for all the requirements of the soul;—enough for life and death, time and eternity.

It is a needful portion. Many things combine to show this: the testimony of Scripture, the experience of all believers, the joys of heaven by its possession, and the terror of hell by its loss. "One thing is needful."

It is an attainable portion. But where? Not in the world;—all is perishing there. In the sanctuary, in the Bible, at the throne of grace. Many cannot obtain wealth, because

they have no present capital to commence their exertions in trade with; but it is not so here. Poverty is no hindrance; riches, so far from facilitating, often prove a serious barrier. "He that hath no money" may obtain the pearl of great price.

It is an everlasting portion. Oh to have a portion when all terrestrial things are at an end! Then the Christian may say, Let the world pass away, my portion is not there; let riches take to themselves wings, my portion is not there; let the elements melt with fervent heat, and all nature sink in ruins, "the Lord is my portion, saith my soul."

November 13.

HOW GOD IS THE BELIEVER'S PORTION.

"The Lord is my portion, saith my soul."—Lam. iii. 24.

All earthly schemes of happiness are like the broken moonbeams on the surface of the troubled waters; but religion stands like a firm and majestic rock, defying the rage of the elements, and courting the sunshine of heaven on its lofty summit. Having noticed the nature of the believer's portion, let us view

The manner in which he becomes possessed of it.

By sovereign choice. God is the portion of his people, by the free and unmerited donation of himself, in the councils of peace, from eternity. The Father saw man, in his lost and ruined condition; the violated law demanded satisfaction; offended justice cried for vengeance; truth said, Strike; but mercy said, Spare. The Son came forward, and entered into an engagement to become our surety. The Spirit was witness to the deed. Had it not been for these provisions of love, man had never enjoyed God as his portion.

By adopting mercy. Men are by nature the children of Satan, alienated from God; but, being regenerated by grace, they are adopted into the family of heaven. "If children, then heirs." This change is produced not by the application of water on the face, but by the infusion of grace into the soul.

By union to Christ. In the period of conversion, this spiritual union takes place. "If any man be in Christ, he is a

new creature." Christ takes hold of the soul by his Spirit, and the soul lays hold on Christ by faith.

By experimental enjoyment. It is not the knowledge of the head, but the experience of the heart, we want to make us happy. If God is our portion, we shall enjoy him and delight in him. The mere professor of religion exclaims with the tongue, "The Lord is my portion;" but the Christian alone can adopt the language of the text, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul." We have seen the Christian's lot: now in what does the unbeliever's portion consist? Not in God, for you are living without him:

> "Your hope and portion lie below,
> 'T is all the happiness you know."

And all you will know, till you flee to Christ.

November 14.

THE INGATHERING OF THE GENTILES.

"And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."—Matt. viii. 11.

We find in the context, that our Saviour was requested by a Roman centurion to heal his servant, who was sick of the palsy. The man discovered great humility and faith. Our Lord pronounced this eulogium on him: "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel;" and then uttered the language of our text, in which there are several topics for our consideration.

The act. "Many shall *come*." We may inquire from and to what they shall come. *From the worship of idols, to the service of God.* When the dayspring from on high shall visit the heathen nations now sitting in darkness, they shall renounce idolatry, and embrace Christianity. *To a sense of their sin and misery.* We must come to a sense of our danger, before we can realize the blessings of salvation. The prodigal came to himself before he arose and went to his father. *To Christ.* To a knowledge of him, faith in him, love to him, and communion with him. *To heaven.* None but those who

come to Christ here can expect to be with him in glory. This is the design of the Gospel, the end of our faith, and the realization of all our hopes, to come to the state of the blessed in heaven.

THE NUMBER. "*Many* shall come." Here are two ideas.

Greatness as to number. The Captain of our salvation brings many sons to glory. Our ideas on this subject are perhaps too limited. More will be saved than many seem to imagine. Great numbers have already come, and thousands more are on their way.

Diversity as to the individuals themselves. The Jews imagined that they only could be saved: the Pope pretended to take the keys, and shut the gates of heaven against all those who were not of the Catholic faith; but it must not be so with us. Christianity does not breathe the air of but one country, or bear the color of but one tribe of the human family, or pronounce the watchword of one party. She holds her throne in the world, and is throwing her golden chain around the universe, that all may touch it and be saved. Love, says one, is the central fire on the common altar of our God, that melts down our differences, or conceals them in the flame of the holy sacrifice. Have I come to Christ? It matters not to me how many come, if I still remain at a distance.

November 15.

THE FUTURE GLORY OF THE CHURCH.

"And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."—Matt. viii. 11.

WE have noticed from these words the act and the number; let us now consider

THE DISTANCE. "From the east and west." The two extremes; thus, when any great distance is intimated, it is said, As far as the east is from the west. Is it not a wonder that God should have a church in our own country, which some centuries ago was only a waste forest, dark and benighted? How unlikely, then, according to human calculations, would it have seemed that many should come from England! He who has destroyed the idolatry of many of the Gentile nations,

caused the tyranny of Rome to bend beneath the mighty power of religion, and illuminated the country in which we live with the light of the glorious Gospel, cannot he roll the wheels of his triumphant chariot from east to west, and north to south, till for him the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose?

The happiness. "And shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." Here is the idea of *rest*, as opposed to the toils and labors of earth. Here the Christian pilgrim is on a journey, he is travelling; there he shall sit down in rest and tranquillity. *Provision.* They shall sit down at the heavenly feast. It is a feast of redeeming love and sovereign grace, a suitable, soul-satisfying, and abundant feast. *Social enjoyment.* Men sit down at a feast, not only for the purpose of eating and drinking, but for familiar and friendly intercourse. Part of the happiness of heaven will consist in the communion of saints. Only Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are named, but all the rest of the redeemed are included; a part is put for the whole. *Dignity.* We have noticed the associates in this happiness: let us now look at its scene; where is it to be enjoyed? "In the kingdom of heaven." The kingdom to which they shall be advanced has many excellent properties. It is a wealthy, joyful, peaceful, holy, extensive, populous, and everlasting kingdom.

The certainty. "I say unto you." This is the authority on which the whole rests. We have the testimony of Jesus, and on it we may with confidence rely. Many of the heathen are pressing into the kingdom of God; are you still loitering about the entrance? Many of them are the subjects of grace; are you still in a state of nature? God forbid that while they shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, you should be cast out!

November 16.

THE WAY OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

"The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous."—Psalm i. 6.

This is a consoling truth to believers, when under a cloud; their principles and pursuits are often misrepresented; but such aspersions are only like smoke blown upon a diamond, which, though it clouds its beauty for the present, is easily rubbed off, and the gem restored to its genuine lustre. Let us from this passage observe

The Christian's character. "The righteous." By nature there is none righteous; believers are entitled to the appellation, not from human merit, but divine mercy. How? By the imputation of the Saviour's righteousness, and by the implantation of the Spirit's grace; the one is for our justification, the other for our sanctification; the one rescues us from hell, the other fits us for heaven; the one delivers us from the wrath of God, the other prepares us for communion with God.

The Christian's way. It has many properties.

It is a peculiar way. It is not the way of the world, but that of the Church. Christians are a "peculiar people," as it regards the character they sustain, the resources on which they depend, the motives by which they are influenced, and the end they have in prospect.

It is a difficult way. How hard to escape the pollutions, and free ourselves from the snares, of an enticing world; to hold communion with the skies, while our evil hearts are drawing us from God; to enter the world in our lawful avocations, and yet to come out of it in our Christian principles and pursuits!

It is an honorable way. It is the highway of the King of kings—true dignity is stamped on every pilgrim who is found in this way; he is going forward to the highest promotion. But

It is a despised way. And that by the generality of mankind who refuse to walk in it. By many it is represented as the way of folly and delusion; but these speak evil of things which they know not.

The Christian's comfort. "The Lord *knoweth* the way of the righteous." This includes much more than mere knowl-

edge; though this is a privilege. How encouraging to remember, that there is One above who knows all our ways, and is acquainted with every movement of our minds! But he *approves* of this way; and is it not a privilege to have the smiles of his approbation! "His favor is life, and his loving-kindness is better than life."

November 17.

THE WAY OF THE UNGODLY.

"The way of the ungodly shall perish."—Psalm i. 6.

In this Psalm the righteous and the wicked are described by what they are not, by what they are, and by what they shall be. Our text furnishes us with a mournful account of the wicked. Notice

His CHARACTER. "The ungodly." *They are unmindful of God.* They are unmindful of his power, and resist him; unmindful of his holiness, and commit uncleanness; unmindful of his justice, and think to escape punishment; unmindful of his goodness and long-suffering and despise it; unmindful of his word, his ordinances, and his works. *They are unthankful to God.* Ingratitude is a base feeling. We deprecate it when shown by man to man, but how hateful is man's ingratitude to God! *They are unlike God.* In a state of innocence, man bore the image of his Maker—by sin, the impress is defaced; it is only by grace it can be restored.

His WAY. It has many properties. It is a sinful way. Sin contrived it, and sinners walk in it. Here sinful thoughts are harbored, sinful desires are cherished, sinful objects are pursued, and sinful pleasures are enjoyed. It is a sorrowful way. "Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another God." It is a hard way. "The way of transgressors is hard." It is a foolish way. "This their way is their folly." While religion is a reasonable service, and "the way of the wise;" there is nothing so unreasonable as the course pursued by the wicked. It is a broad way. "Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction." It is much frequented; yea, crowded with travellers, all eager to pursue it. It is an unprofitable way. "Treasures of wickedness profit nothing." What fruit is to be gathered here!

His end. "He shall perish." His *thoughts* shall perish. All his vain, foolish thoughts, either of obtaining salvation by the works of the law, or braving the judgment of the Almighty. His *hopes* shall perish. He has no hope beyond the grave. His *joys* shall perish. The pleasures of sin are only for a season. His *name* shall perish. "The memory of the just is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot." His *body* shall perish. "Like sheep they are laid in the grave." His *soul* shall perish; and that in hell, with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord. Let me strive to avoid such a dangerous course, shun the first step that leads to it, and walk in the way of the righteous, that my end may be peace.

"Then, while 'tis called to-day,
Oh! hear the Gospel's sound;
Come, sinners, haste, oh! haste away,
While pardon may be found."

November 18.

THE BLESSING OF PARDON.

"Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."—Acts xiii. 38.

These words are like a sparkling diamond, which, however you may turn and examine it, is on all sides beautiful, sending forth new rays of light and lovely coloring. They are part of Paul's sermon in the synagogue at Antioch. Consider

The inestimable blessing announced. "The forgiveness of sins." Pardon does not destroy the fact of sin, neither does it alter its nature, to make it less sinful; but it frees the sinner from the punishment of sin. There are several properties belonging to it.

It is complete. It is not a partial but a full and universal forgiveness. It extends to all sins, original and actual; sins of omission and commission. It is said of the penitent in the day of conversion, "Thy sins are forgiven thee: go in peace."

It is free. This is the character of all the blessings of the Gospel; they are conferred by grace, "without money, and without price." If a price were set, who could pay it? If you come for this blessing with empty hands, a longing heart, and a humble spirit, you shall not be disappointed.

It is needful. It is essentially requisite for the present peace and final happiness of the soul. Is it necessary to be reconciled to God, to escape his wrath, to enjoy his favor, and to obtain a title to glory everlasting? Then it is necessary to be pardoned. Nothing can equal this blessing in value. Without it the world is a blank; everything else is dull and insipid, like fruit that has lost its flavor, or the coloring taken out of the picture, or the rising mist that obscures the beauty of the landscape. Lord, say unto my soul, I am thy salvation!

"Relief alone is found
In Jesus' precious blood;
'Tis this that heals the mortal wounds,
And reconciles to God."

November 19.

THE GENERAL PROCLAMATION OF FORGIVENESS.

Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."—Acts xiii. 38.

If I win Christ, said one, I am rich; if I am found in him, I am safe; if I know him, I am wise to salvation. Through Christ believers are to expect everything, from the first rays of hope that the soul discovers in the breakings forth of the morning of the Christian life, to the noon-tide splendor of Christian maturity and perfection in glory. The passage before us leads us to the contemplation of the blessing of pardon in

The medium of its communication. "Through this man," that is, the man Christ Jesus; through the spotless nature, perfect obedience, vicarious sufferings, efficacious death, and prevalent intercession of the Redeemer.

He procures it as a Priest. This he did on the cross. Pardon is the fruit of his atonement; it is purchased with a price that none in the whole universe beside could pay.

He proclaims it as a Prophet. This he did when on earth in his own person; and now he is in heaven, by the preaching of his ambassadors.

He confers it as a King. This he does now he is on the throne. "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins."

THE OBJECTS TO WHOM IT IS TO BE PROCLAIMED. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren;" none are excluded but those who shut themselves out by their unbelief. *It is made known to you in the Scriptures.* There you read of its source, nature, value, importance, and results. *It is made known to you in the sanctuary.* Our message from time to time is forgiveness through the blood of Christ; and we would announce it fully, plainly, faithfully, earnestly, and affectionately. The ark of salvation appears before you, floating above the waters of divine wrath; the storm-cloud is passing away, the sky is bright and serene, and the dove is seen flying in the Gospel firmament, with the olive-branch of peace. Come and enter in, that you may be saved.

November 20.

THE CHARACTER OF THE REDEEMER.

"And many more believed because of his own word; and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."—John iv. 41, 42.

THE narrative of the woman of Samaria recorded in this chapter, is highly interesting. Jesus must needs go through Samaria, for he had a covenant engagement to fulfil there. The woman herself, being brought to a knowledge of the truth, felt desirous that others might participate with her. This is a good evidence of grace. See the result in the text.

THE CHARACTER OF THE REDEEMER. "The Christ, the Saviour of the world." This appellation is full of encouragement to the penitent sinner. Consider

What he saves from. From sin in its guilt, pollution, curse, power, and love; from the wrath of God, and the flames of hell. Here there is a remedy for every disease.

What he saves to. To holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Thus the Christian is made holy; his thoughts, desires, motives, and pursuits are associated with holiness. To the favor of God here, and the glories of heaven hereafter.

How he saves. By the efficacy of his death, and the power of his Spirit. By the one the blessing is procured; by the other, it is applied. He saves effectually, willingly, freely, and to the uttermost.

Whom he saves. He is styled, "the Saviour of the world." This shows the extent of his blessings. Come, sinner, and rest on him. A simple-hearted, but spiritually-instructed minister was once earnestly expostulating with sinners, and inviting them to the Saviour, and he said, "*Run* with patience the race set before you;" but you say, I cannot run—then *walk*. "Walk humbly with thy God;" but you say, I cannot walk—then *stand*. "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths;" but you say, I cannot stand—then *crawl*. "Fear not, thou worm, Jacob, and ye men of Israel: I will help thee, saith the Lord;" but you say I cannot crawl to him—then *look*. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else."

November 21.

THE CONDUCT OF THE SAMARITANS.

"And many more believed because of his own word; and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."—John iv. 41, 42.

If the blessings of salvation are in us as a well of water, that water will spring up in our active exertions with regard to those around us. We have an exemplification of this in the character and conduct of the woman of Samaria; and the passage before us discovers to us the beneficial effects which her efforts produced. Let us observe

The conduct of the Samaritans. Four things are stated respecting them.

The candor they showed. "We have heard him ourselves." At the entreaty of the woman, they came and listened to the Saviour's words; and they were caught in the Gospel net, their minds were impressed and their hearts softened by the power of sovereign grace. How many are so strongly prejudiced against religion, that they will not sit under the sound of the Gospel! To such we would say, Come and judge for yourselves: "Oh! taste and see that the Lord is good."

The acknowledgment they made. "And know that this is indeed the Christ." Those who have been brought to a saving knowledge of Christ, will not be ashamed to make an open

confession of him. If we have rightly heard him for ourselves, we shall quickly speak of him to others.

The faith they exercised. "Now we believe." Faith cometh by hearing. Perhaps they had often heard of him before this period, and considered him as a false prophet and a deceiver; but now they had heard and seen him, they had no doubt about his Divine mission.

The feeling they manifested. "Now we believe, not because of thy saying," they said to the woman; "for we have heard him ourselves." It was "because of his own word" that they believed. We must always distinguish between human instrumentality and Divine agency, and give unto the Lord the glory that is due unto his name. We must not go by hearsay in matters of religion:—"Come and see." Behold here the condescension of Jesus. The Samaritans were a despised and depraved people, and this woman had been a wicked character; but he is no respecter of persons.

November 22.

THE INTERESTING VISION.

"Thy loving-kindness is before mine eyes."—Psalm xxvi. 3.

When calumny hurls her envenomed dart, and care spreads her heavy wings over the soul, how delightful is it to look out of the bright opening which religion presents, and see the loving-kindness of the Lord! This David did. See here

The interesting vision referred to. Consider

What it is. What is the object of this vision? "Thy loving-kindness." God's loving-kindness is displayed in nature, providence, and grace. But as it refers to the Christian, it intimates the special, free, and unmerited favor of God. It is designated "merciful kindness," Psalm cxix. 76. "Marvellous kindness," Psalm xxxi. 21. "Great kindness," Neh. ix. 17. "Everlasting kindness," Isa. liv. 8. Love is the principle, kindness is the product; the one is the cause, the other the effect.

Where it is to be seen. We behold God's name inscribed on all his works; but he appears at a distance; the glass of the Gospel has a magnifying power, and brings him near. We see his loving-kindness in the work of Christ. This world was the

grand scene of it, when God was manifest in the flesh. See it in the stable of Bethlehem; hear its praises in the angels' songs. It was published in the towns and villages of Palestine; it was made known in the cities, fields, mountains, and deserts of Judea. The cross proclaims it. Look within the veil and behold Jesus, no longer presenting sacrifice at the altar, but pouring incense before the throne. See, in the preaching of the Gospel, the provisions of grace, and the offers of mercy, the loving-kindness of the Lord.

How it is to be beheld. What is it to have it before our eyes? It includes *a proper apprehension of it.* "Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord." *A high value for it.* We cast aside that which we do not value, but have before us that which we esteem; we like it in view. *A constant regard to it.* So David says, "I have set the Lord always before me." With regard to anything on which we have our minds set, we say, We do not lose sight of it. So it should be with God's loving-kindness.

November 23.

THE BENEFICIAL CONTEMPLATION.

"Thy loving-kindness is before mine eyes."—Psalm xxvi. 3.

In the last exercise the interesting vision of God's loving-kindness passed under our review: let us now contemplate

The benefits resulting from a continual view of it.

It will lead to repentance. And is not this an advantage? There is an indescribable feeling of comfort, even in that brokenness of heart, and melting of soul which the true penitent feels. The tear-drop of spiritual sorrow is more brilliant than the glittering diamond sparkling in the sunbeam; but it shall be exhaled by the light of the Lord, and exchanged for the gem of pardon. A sight only of the justice, power, holiness, and truth of God, is not calculated to bring the tears of repentance; but when his loving-kindness is beheld darting forth its lovely rays, like a rainbow in the cloud, joy is the portion of the soul.

It will promote spirituality of mind. If our thoughts and desires are fixed much on this world, it will render us earthly

and sensual; but the more our attention is led to God and heaven, the more shall we increase in spirituality of mind.

It will yield solace in affliction. In the season of gloom, we look too much at our trials, and too little at God's loving-kindness. Is the cloud of affliction so dark, that the light of God's countenance cannot penetrate it? It has sweetened many a bitter cup, and lightened many a heavy load.

It will enable us to triumph in death. God's loving-kindness will be a light to glisten on the dark waters of Jordan, enabling us to catch a glimpse of the opposite shore, before we have launched from this. What folly and madness do the ungodly discover, in preferring the scenes of vanity before their eyes, to the loving-kindness of God! Let me act a different part, and remember, for my encouragement, that if I have God's loving-kindness before my eyes on earth, I shall forever have it in my heart, and on my tongue in heaven.

November 24.

THE TRUE MESSIAH.

"We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ."—John i. 41.

Those who know Christ will desire that others may become acquainted with him. When the woman of Samaria found the Saviour at Jacob's well, she went her way and published his fame in the city. Paul's desire for his brethren, the Jews, was not that a worldly kingdom might be restored to them, but that they might be saved. He preached Christ at the tribunal of the judge who was trying him. When Andrew had found Christ, he said to his own brother Simon, "We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ." Several things may be here observed.

The title ascribed to the Saviour. The word Messias is Hebrew, and the word Christ is Greek; but the meaning of each is, the Anointed Saviour. As the prophets, priests, and kings, under the old dispensation, were anointed to their several offices, so our Redeemer was set apart to his mediatorial office. Believers have a spiritual anointing; though it is the same in kind, it is very different in degree to that of the Saviour. The gifts and graces of the Spirit in believers are like water in the

cistern, but in Christ like water in the ocean; in them they are as the light in the atmosphere, but in him as the light of the sun. Christ, as the Messias, was sent by the Father to execute his mediatorial office.

The act of the Christian. He finds the Saviour. This implies the exercise of seeking him, which is the duty and delight of all that are taught of God. There are several marks belonging to those who have found Christ. They have seen their lost estate. They feel their need of Christ as a Prophet to illuminate their understandings, a Priest to expiate their guilt, and a King to subdue their corruptions, and reign and rule over them. They have renounced self-righteousness; a legal spirit is quite incompatible with an enlightened mind; they are resting on the atonement of Christ; if we are built on him, the rubbish of self-righteousness must be cleared away, the foundation dug deep in the work of conviction, the first stone laid in the heart, and the superstructure raised under the direction of the Spirit, the temple Builder.

November 25.

THE PRIVILEGE OF FINDING CHRIST.

"We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ."—John i. 41.

The Gospel resembles a beautiful flower, of which the bud is seen in Eden, the expanding leaves on Mount Sinai, the blossom on Calvary, and its glowing beauties in Immanuel's land. Happy is the man who has it in the soil of his heart; he can experimentally utter those words: he knows

The privilege of finding Christ. Those who find him obtain *Spiritual life.* He says, "Whoso findeth me findeth life." This life consists in the renovation of the whole man after the image of God in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. *Saving knowledge.* We designate it "saving," to distinguish it from a mere speculative acquaintance with divine things, which may exist in the minds of those who have not found Christ. *A free pardon.* The Saviour brings love in his heart, power in his arms, and pardon in his hand. When this pardon is conferred, there is no condemnation to the believer. *Holiness.* This is the brightest ornament that can adorn us.

When we find Christ, we arrive at the fountain that is opened for sin and uncleanness; and thus, while by the righteousness of Christ the guilt of sin is expiated, by his Spirit its pollution is cleansed. *A refuge.* Under this character he is revealed. He came to wipe away the tear of pity from the eyes of the sorrowful, to plant the balm of consolation in the heart of the miserable, and to make our sky bright with the prospect of a glorious immortality. At his coming was erected that magnificent edifice of mercy into which so many thousands have entered and found peace. Those who find Christ, find in him the best of all relations, a Surety, a Shepherd, a Leader, a Physician, a Friend, an Advocate, a Portion. Have we found Christ? If so, we shall love him, live on him, and live to him.

"Yes, thou art precious to my soul,
My transport and my trust;
Jewels to thee are gaudy toys,
And gold is sordid dust."

November 26.

THE ARK A TYPE OF CHRIST.

"And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel."—Exod. xxv. 22.

Moses received directions from God for the making of the tabernacle, and the various things belonging to it. There was the outer court, the holy place, and the holy of holies; and this was figurative of the Church in its natural state, in grace, and in glory. One of the principal things in the tabernacle was the ark, and this was a type of Christ. Let us here contemplate

The typical representation. It may be viewed

In its materials. It was made of shittim wood, which was called eternal wood, because of its durable quality—it was almost incorruptible, no worm could penetrate it. This represents the durableness of the humanity of Christ. The ark was to be covered with gold, and this sets forth the Divinity of Christ. As the wood and the gold were united in one ark, so

the humanity and Divinity of the Saviour met in one glorious Person. "His humanity," observes M'Ewen, "is like the cedar, the fruit of the earth, but not subject to corruption; and his Divinity, like the gold in the ark, embosoms his human nature, ennobles, but is not blended with it."

In its design. It was made for the purpose of depositing the two tables of the law. The law that was broken by the hand of Moses was henceforth to be preserved in the ark. Christ came into the world to keep the law in his active and passive obedience. Here we find the law written not on paper, parchment, or stone, but in the life of Christ, it was living, breathing, and walking.

In its having the two cherubims. "And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy-seat," ver. 18. This represented the two churches, the one under the Old, and the other under the New Testament. The law was a shadow of good things to come; Christ is the sum and substance of all. This may allude also to the ministrations of angels, who "desire to look into" these things; and it may regard the two ministries, prophets under the Old, and apostles under the New Testament dispensation; they both meet in Christ. It was further typical

In its being carried from place to place by the priests. This must have been a very solemn scene. Christ in the dignity of his person, the grandeur of his work, the efficacy of his atonement, the plenitude of his grace, and the final triumphs of his cross, is now carried by the ministers of the Gospel; we proclaim him as the end of the law, the substance of the Gospel, the rock of our foundation, the object of our faith, the anchor of our hope, the source of our joy, and the Saviour of the soul. The geography of the Jewish dispensation was only Canaan, among one nation; but that of the Christian dispensation includes the whole world.

There is a place where Jesus sheds
The oil of gladness on our heads,—
A place of all on earth most sweet;
It is the blood-bought mercy-seat.

There, there, on eagle wings we soar,
And sin and sense molest no more;
And heaven comes down our souls to greet,
And glory crowns the mercy-seat.

November 27.

COMMUNION AT THE MERCY-SEAT.

"And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel."—Exod. xxv. 22.

It is highly interesting to trace the analogy between the Old and New Testaments. The prophets and priests under the law had, as it were, the light of the moon; thus they were distinguished from the surrounding heathen nations, with whom it was the darkness of night; age after age passed on, and the light increased, till at length John, the forerunner of Christ, appeared like the morning star, melting into the light of day, when the Sun of righteousness was seen irradiating the horizon of Judea; and thus was fulfilled the prophetic declaration, "The people that sat in darkness have seen a great light." Let us notice some other points in which the ark was typical of Christ.

There was a blessing wherever it went. God blessed the house of Obed Edom, because he lodged the ark. Did you ever hear of any who were real losers by religion? "Godliness is profitable unto all things;" wisdom is better than rubies; in her right hand is length of days, and in her left hand are riches and honor. Do you speak of dignity?

"A Christian is the highest style of man."

Do you speak of wealth? He has the unsearchable riches of Christ. Do you speak of comforts? He has everlasting consolation. Do you speak of joy? He is filled with joy and peace in believing. Look at him in danger; "God is my refuge," he exclaims. Look at him in affliction; with a smile of composure he says, "Thy will be done." Look at him under temporal losses; he is resigned. Look at him in death; "I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." And when the world shall pass away, he shall be able to stand on its ruins, and say, "I have lost nothing; the Lord is my portion, saith my soul."

The wonderful victories it achieved. It overturned the walls of Jericho, being carried round them for seven days. It overthrew Dagon the Philistines' god, so that that idol was broken

in pieces. It opened a passage for Israel to pass through the river Jordan. If ever the strong-holds of Satan are brought down, it must be by Christ; if ever we pass safely through the swellings of Jordan to the heavenly Canaan, it must be by Christ. If Christ is in the heart, every idol must come down. A missionary in a foreign land was travelling with a young convert, and as they went to see the various idol temples in which heathen gods were worshipped, the young man wished to pull them down and destroy them; "No," said the missionary, "let us preach Christ, and they will pull them down themselves." If Christ is preached and received, our language will be—

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from thy throne,
And worship only thee."

We have in the text

A GRACIOUS PROMISE. "And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat." In Christ, God meets the sinner to be reconciled to him, to distribute his favors, to hold fellowship with him, and to show him his glory. Remember, if God is found, it must be in Christ. We cannot meet or commune with him through any other medium.

"There is a place where Jesus sheds
The oil of gladness on our heads—
A place of all on earth most sweet;
It is the blood-bought mercy-seat."

November 28.

THE MOMENTOUS INQUIRY.

"Man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?"—Job xiv. 10.

In this verse three things are referred to with regard to man's death. What occurs before death? "He wasteth away." What takes place at death? "He giveth up the ghost;" and what is the inquiry after death? "Where is he?" Here is

A SOLEMN STATEMENT. "Man giveth up the ghost;" the body returns to the earth, and the spirit is given up to God.

Death is solemn in its nature. We cannot contemplate it aright, without feeling our minds awed and impressed. If it is terrible to nature, it is serious to grace. What a solemn spectacle is death, as viewed in our beloved friends and connections! *It is universal in its ravages.* Death is called "the king of terrors," and he has a vast dominion. Xerxes, after destroying all the temples of Greece, spared that of Diana, on account of the elegance of its structure; but nothing can avert the relentless hand of death. It is not, observes one, to be restrained by infant cries, or by beauty's tears; by manly eloquence, or by the sage importunity of hoary age. The scythe of death mows down the full-bloom flower and the medicinal herb, as well as the poisonous weed. *It is certain in its approach.* The period of it is uncertain, but the event is sure. Its certainty is confirmed by the testimony of Scripture, past history, and daily observation. *It is eternal in its results.* It is not so much the article of death itself, as that which comes after it, that excites the fears and alarms of mankind. As the tree falls, so it must lie; as death leaves us, judgment will find us. But here is

A MOMENTOUS INQUIRY. "Where is he?" The body is conveyed to the silent grave, but the soul! the thinking and imperishable part of our nature, where is it? This depends on the character and state of the individual. Here is the grand alternative:

If a saint, he is in the realms of glory No more pursuing the lawful avocations of life—no more enlivening by his piety and devotedness the domestic circle—no more the subject of trials and sorrows, doubts and fears—he has gone home, and is no more a stranger and pilgrim on the earth.

If a sinner, he is in the regions of the lost. It is in vain to look for him in his old haunts of iniquity, vice, and dissipation. Where is he? Not in the company of the gay and licentious, not in the giddy throng, among the sons of unhallowed mirth, and the lovers of sinful pleasure. Where is he? Not in the theatre, the ball-room, or at the card table, but with the devil and his angels, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. I am hastening to the margin of time, and standing, as it were, on the brink of eternity; what are my views, thoughts, and feelings? Have I made preparation for the solemn events that await me? Let me flee to Him who is the resurrection and the life, and seek to die daily.

November 29.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION.

"Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth."—John v. 28, 29.

Revelation casts a gleam of brightness over the shadows of death, and irradiates the darkness of the sepulchre. Let us contemplate

The doctrine of the resurrection. It is evident from

The power of God. Many, because they are not able to explain it according to the principles of reason, have pronounced it false. But is it fair to deny a fact because we cannot understand it? Shall we deny the being of a God, because we cannot comprehend his nature and essence? or refuse to believe the two-fold nature of man, because we cannot explain the tie by which his mortal and immortal being are united! Can you understand the precise process of the little seed you hold in your hand; how, after it is put into the ground, it springs forth, first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear? and yet that transition is true. "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" Think of that omnipotent power, which in the beginning gathered together in one united, harmonious, and stupendous system, the myriads of atoms which compose the material universe. Think of the divine fiat which brought light out of darkness, and beauty and order out of the chaotic mass of confusion.

The testimony of Scripture. How plainly is this glorious doctrine revealed, both in the Old and New Testaments! See Dan. xii. 2; Matt. xxii. 31; 1 Cor. xv. Paul, when among the learned philosophers at Athens, preached Jesus and the resurrection. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable:" it is no enjoyment to feel the chisel of the celestial sculptor, if I know when I am completed, the statue is to be shivered into a thousand fragments.

The resurrection of Christ. This is the argument Paul uses in that chapter in which he describes, in such glowing and lively characters, the resurrection of the dead. "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." The resurrection of the Saviour involves in it the principles of our immortality. It was said of him, and must be said of each of us, "He is not here, he is risen:" "for *all* that are in the graves shall hear his voice."

November 30.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

"They that have done good, unto the resurrection of life."—John v. 29.

Our attention is here invited to the consideration of a pleasing subject.

The resurrection of the righteous. Three things may be observed.

The character they bear. "They that have done good." This alludes not to mere moral virtues, which indeed are excellent in themselves, but to spiritual attainments; believers have the root of the matter in them and manifest this to be the case in the fruits of holiness which they bear. The grace they have received is the foundation on which the superstructure of their good works is built. They have done good by walking worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called, by exerting themselves in the Redeemer's cause, and cultivating holy tempers and dispositions.

The manner of their rising. They shall rise in glory and splendor, like Christ's glorious body; in power, made capable of bearing the weight of eternal glory spiritual, nst that the body is turned into a spirit, but possessed of spiritual attributes and qualities, "a spiritual body." "No scene in nature is more lovely than a summer landscape at sunrise, when every field, grove, and hedge, is spangled with morning dew. The drops seem to sparkle with conscious delight at the appearance of the sun, climbing, as he ascends, to the top of every leaf, as if impatient to meet him in the air; and when the Sun of righteousness shall arise on the morning of the resurrection, the heirs of glory will be as numerous and beautiful as the dew from the womb of the morning."

The happiness they shall attain. "The resurrection of *life*." A life of freedom from all evil; there not a tear of bereavement is shed, for the parting sound shall be heard no more; there not a pang of sorrow shall be felt, for grief shall be unknown; there no feeling of repentance shall be experienced, for sin cannot enter; not the least taint of corruption shall be found there; "they are without fault before the throne of God." A life of eternal pleasures, suited to the enlarged capacity of the glorified spirit. Baxter says of heaven, "Every day is noontide,

every month is summer, every year a jubilee, every age manhood, every life eternity." O blessed eternity! crown of my crown, glory of my glory, perfection of my perfection! Let me seek to be risen with Christ in a state of grace, that I may rise to him in a state of glory!

December 1.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE WICKED.

"And they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."—John v. 29.

As there is a contrast between the righteous and the wicked in their present condition, so there is in their future state. The grave to the believer is a bed of roses, on which he sleeps till he is awakened at the last day; but to the unbeliever it is a dark prison, in which he is confined till summoned to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. Let us view

THE RESURRECTION OF THE WICKED. Observe

Their sinful character. "They that have done evil." This applies to all the unregenerate; their heart is evil, their thoughts and imaginations, desires, words, and pursuits, are evil. Does not that man do evil who despises the Son of God, neglects the great salvation, prefers the welfare of the body to the concerns of the soul?

Their awful punishment. "The resurrection of damnation." This punishment is *dreadful*, and consists in the separation of body and soul from God, the tremendous weight of his wrath and curse, and the gnawing worm of a guilty conscience. It is *deserved.* "The wages of sin is death:" this is the second death, where hell is the sepulchre, and there is no resurrection. It is *unavoidable.* God's righteous authority is despised, and his justice is provoked; and if we are not interested in the atonement of Christ, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation. It is *eternal.* When as many millions of ages have passed away as there are sands on the seashore, stars in the heavens, drops in the ocean, or atoms in the globe, the misery of the lost shall not be one moment nearer to its end. Let me remember that I am now warned to flee from the wrath to come, and escape for my life to Jesus, the ransom and surety of lost sinners.

December 2.

THE DESPISED SAVIOUR.

"He is despised and rejected of men."—Isa. liii. 3.

These words are spoken of Christ; let us view them

As the record of an awful fact. Here is the Son of God despised and rejected of men. This was the case when he appeared in human form, to accomplish the work of salvation; and it is so now. To whom is the statement applicable? *To those who deny his Godhead.* Such individuals despise and slight his person, reject his claims, and refuse to acknowledge his divine credentials. *Those who despise his blessings.* He has pardon, peace, joy, and all needful blessings to bestow; but the language of thousands is, "Thy gifts be to thyself." *Those who neglect his ordinances.* The voice from the closet, the sanctuary, the Scriptures, and the domestic circle, is, "He is despised and rejected of men." Let us regard these words

As the utterance of a sorrowful lamentation. Here is the complaint of a good man. Our grief is excited when we think of *the excellency of the Object despised.* "*He* is despised." But is there any real ground of offence in him? No. He possesses everything calculated to draw forth our affections to him. We are grieved when we think of *the conduct of those who despise him.* They are guilty of the greatest folly, ingratitude, and rebellion: they are "sinners against their own souls." Consider the words

As the exposure of a great sin. Those who are guilty of it *despise the best Friend*, one whose friendship sweetens our mercies, soothes our sorrows, and enriches our souls. They *reject the richest blessings*, preferring the dust of earthly pleasures to the diamonds and jewels of spiritual enjoyments. They *expose themselves to the greatest misery.* An awful punishment awaits those who "crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh." Let me earnestly pray to behold the glories and excellences of Christ, that I may love him supremely, and beware of despising his people; for what is done to them he considers as done to himself. It is between Christ and his Church as between two lute-strings; no sooner is one struck, but the other trembles. When Saul persecuted the Church, Jesus said to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

December 3.

THE NATURE OF DYING DAILY.

"I die daily."—1 Cor. xv. 31.

So said Paul, and it were well if we could adopt the same language. Let us here notice

THE NATURE OF THE DUTY REFERRED TO. What is it to die daily?

It supposes a readiness for death. This is twofold, habitual and actual: the one consists in a change produced in our nature and state; the other, in a comfortable assurance of a better life in the world to come. Paul was actually as well as habitually prepared for death; for he could say, "I am now ready to depart."

It implies a serious consideration of death. It is hard to bring the mind to bear on this solemn subject; we naturally recoil from it. But death to Christians is only the transplantation of the flowers of grace from the nursery ground of the church below to the garden of Paradise above: during the process there may be the appearance of withering; but they soon revive, spreading their leaves in greater freshness, and blooming with increased beauty.

It includes a watchfulness for death. "Being ready" argues a safe state, and "watching," a suitable frame. Christians, though warriors, are not always watchers; sometimes they forget their way, their work, their warfare, and their journey's end.

It involves a continued act of self-dedication. To die daily is daily to surrender ourselves into our Redeemer's hands, not knowing how long we have to live. David did this—Psalm xxxi. 5. Paul did it, and could say, "I know whom I have believed."

It is associated with a desire for the coming of death. Job felt this when he said, "I loathe it: I would not live alway." David said, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away and be at rest." Paul had a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. How melancholy is it that so few engage in the exercise of dying daily! Let me die daily to sin and the world, that I may live to holiness and to God.

December 4.

THE ADVANTAGES OF DYING DAILY.

"I die daily."—1 Cor. xv. 31.

This language sounds strange in the ears of the ungodly, who wish to banish all thoughts of death from their minds; but the true Christian will desire to enter more deeply and fully into its spiritual import. Note

The advantages of this daily death.

It checks worldly-mindedness. The love of the world deplumes the pinions of the soul with which it would soar towards heaven; but a daily look at death will enable us more freely to spread our wings, and rise on high, leaving the world and all things below in the distance.

It subdues pride. The strong man would not glory in his strength, if he were properly affected with the fact, that soon his body shall be consigned to the grave, and covered with putrefaction. Shall we be proud of this clay tenement that shall crumble into ruins? Let us rather strive after the beauty of the immortal spirit.

It prepares us for dying comfortably. It is impossible for us to die peacefully till we have learned the important lesson of dying daily. The believer's death may be compared, not so much to the setting sun that sinks behind the darkened west, obscured among the tempests of the sky, as to the morning star that melts away into the light of heaven.

December 5.

INTRUSTED TALENTS.

"Occupy till I come."—Luke xix. 13.

We have, in the chapter before us, the parable of the pounds. This represents our Saviour's return from earth to heaven, to take possession of his kingdom, and the opportunities and advantages he gives to us, to use them till the time of reckoning, when he shall come at the last day to judge the world. There are many talents he has given us—reason, health,

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property, influence, the means of grace and religious privileges, are so many talents, concerning which he says, "Occupy till I come." Let us here consider time as a talent intrusted to us to improve.

IT IS A TALENT COMMITTED TO US BY GOD.

He is our Benefactor; "every good and perfect gift is derived from him." Have we life? "In him we live, and move, and have our being." Are we possessed of rational faculties? "The inspiration of the Almighty hath given us understanding." Are we destined to live forever? He kindleth that spark which the waters of death cannot quench. All our advantages are only ours for a season, and human life itself

> "Is but a loan to be repaid with usury,
> When he shall come to call his debtors to account,
> From whom are all our blessings."

IT IS A TALENT OF GREAT VALUE.

What Job said of wisdom may be applied to time. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed as the price thereof." Would you know the value of time? Remember on this moment hangs eternity. Would you know the value of time? "Ask death-beds; they can tell." How many who have squandered away their lives, have said at the last, Oh that I might live one year, one month, one day longer! Oh that the sun might go back ten degrees, as it did on the dial of Ahaz, or even stand still, as it did in answer to Joshua's desire, that I might implore mercy from heaven, ere the darkness of death encompasses me; but no, the appointed time is expired, the divine patience is exhausted, the day of grace is closed, the arrow is flown, the moment is gone, the soul is launched into the ocean of eternity. Would you know the value of time? Remember, when once lost, it can never be regained.

Then to the work of God awake;
  Behold thy Master near;
The various, arduous task pursue
  With vigor and with fear.

The awful register goes on;
  Th' account will surely come:
And opening day, or closing night,
  May bear me to my doom.

December 6.

REDEMPTION OF TIME.

"Redeeming the time."—Col. iv. 5.

This should be our continual employment, seeing that the time is short and so uncertain. We should seek to turn its measured portions to good account. How much of this invaluable commodity have we lost; how little have we redeemed.

It is a talent for which we must give an account. The language of our Master is, "Occupy *till I come*." This is the period of our probation; but the time of retribution will come. You *now* have this talent, but it is only for a season; how soon will the language be heard, "Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer a steward." How little are our minds impressed with the fact of the vast responsibility that attaches itself to us as rational, intelligent, and immortal beings!

It is a talent entrusted to us for our improvement. We are to "occupy," or to trade with his talent, till the coming of our Lord. How may we best improve it *to God?* We are to do it by living to his glory. If we are actuated by right principles, his glory will be the chief object at which we shall aim. *To ourselves.* Time is given us to prepare for eternity. We have much to do in a little time; therefore it becomes us to set about it with all the fervor and earnestness of our souls. The manna was to be gathered in the morning, and the orient pearl is generated by the morning dew. How sad for an individual to begin to die before he has begun to live! *To others.* The love of Christ constrains its possessor to live not to himself. Christianity teaches us to cherish a benevolent and philanthropic spirit; to do good unto all men, but especially unto those who are of the household of faith. This life is peculiarly a state of hope. The anchor of hope is never seen amid the shining waves of the ocean of bliss; nor in the raging tempests of the sea of Jehovah's wrath in hell—it is only used on the river of time—let us fix it within the veil.

"To Jesus may we fly,
Swift as the morning light,
Lest life's young golden beams should die
In sudden, endless night."

December 7.

SWEET EXTRACTED FROM BITTER.

"Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." Judges xiv. 14.

Let us apply this sentiment to

The death of Christ. Mournful indeed was the period when he hung upon the accursed tree, descended into the grave, and became a prisoner of death. Behold the Light of the world wrapped in a mournful shroud, the Sun of righteousness set in blood, and the Lord of life numbered with the dead: no equipage of mourners in black pay their last tribute of respect to him; but the sun becomes black as sackcloth, and shuts his glories in; and there was darkness from the sixth to the ninth hour. We hear of none, who according to the Jewish custom, rent their garments, but the rocks were rent asunder, and the veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom; the inhabitants of hell rejoiced in the supposed ruin and infamy of the cause of Christ: but, "glory to God in the highest," the death of Christ is the life of the world, the triumph of grace, and the salvation of his people. 'Tis this that inspires us with hope, assures us of pardon, and secures eternal glory. From the bitter, God extracts sweet: "out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." Was not the death of Christ the conquering of sin, and the overthrow of Satan's kingdom? The Wonderful Counsellor was too wise for the old serpent, and the Lion of the tribe of Judah too strong for the red dragon. Satan was defeated; "Through death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Interested in the death of Christ, may we not look down to the dreary mansion of the grave? and while we hear the Saviour whisper, "I am the resurrection and the life, ye shall rise again," may we not exclaim, "O grave! where is thy victory? O death! where is thy sting?"

"Here, O my soul! thy trust repose;
If Jesus is forever mine,
Not death itself—that last of foes—
Shall break a union so Divine."

December 8.

SAMSON'S RIDDLE.

"Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." Judges xiv. 14.

Many things in the world of nature are calculated to furnish us with useful reflections, and from which we may derive much instruction. The rose is surrounded with thorns for its preservation and loveliness—so the Christian is encompassed by afflictions; thorns and briers are in his way, for the preservation and improvement of his graces. The thunder-storm, passing along the heavens, purifies the air, and destroys those noxious vapors which would prove injurious to the human frame; so the storm of affliction bursts over the Christian's head, that he may be prepared for the air of holiness, and breathe in the atmosphere of heaven. The darkness of night is essential to the growth of vegetation as well as the light of day; so the dark clouds of adversity tend as much, yea, even more to the believer's advantage than the sunshine of prosperity. We are naturally led to these observations from the language of the text, which contains Samson's riddle, see ver. 12–14. As Samson extracted honey from the lion, so God from the bitter trials of his people extracts sweets, for the increase of their graces, and the promotion of their maturity for heaven. But the sentiment may be applied to many things, which we may find it profitable to consider. We begin with

The occurrence of sin. How lovely was the morning of our world when our first parents were perfectly holy and happy! but it was not to last long; a dark cloud arose, and overspread the whole creation with the shroud of death. Man sinned, he fell, he became unhappy, and was exposed to the wrath of the Most High: and we are all involved in this lost estate. But God from this bitter extracts sweet. While we mourn over the reign of sin by the first Adam, let us rejoice that, by the second Adam, "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life." Is not the Saviour more glorious in the depth of his condescension than in the height of his praises? A monarch is glorious on his throne, swaying the sceptre of authority over a whole nation; but if he descend, and visit the cottage of some poor distressed subject, and dry up the tears of some tried family, shorn of every comfort, and reduced to the last extremity of

woe, is he not more glorious, inasmuch as true dignity is condescending? Christ was glorious, when from all eternity he was seated on his heavenly throne, receiving the joyful acclamations and praises of countless numbers of angelic hosts; but he was more glorious when he came to seek and to save that which was lost. Imagine the condemned criminal, about to suffer the sentence of the law, conducted to the place of execution—just as the unhappy man is about to be launched into eternity, a messenger comes with a free pardon from the king; could he not enjoy more in the reception of the pardon than ever he did before? So the Christian is condemned by a violated law, and no human sacrifice could expiate his crime; he obtains forgiveness through the atonement of Christ, and is delivered from all condemnation.

December 9.

THE CURSE TURNED INTO A BLESSING.

"Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." Judges xiv. 14.

The sentiment contained in these words may also be applied to

The afflictions of God's people. In the immense machinery of Providence, notwithstanding the complicated movement of all the parts, each wheel is revolving in its proper place, for the accomplishment of his purposes, and the display of his glory. We are prone to murmur at God's ways; but the sense of present affliction should not drown the remembrance of past mercies. Words flow apace when we complain; our minds, our mouths, and prayers, are full of our trials. We inscribe his mercies on the sand, and the first wave of trouble washes all away. Are not Christians fed by their afflictions? "Out of the eater comes forth meat;" their graces are fed; their faith, hope, love, and repentance. Happy is it when the death of our comforts proves the resurrection of our graces. Does it not purify? "He shall sit as a refiner to purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver." Does it not improve their graces? "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found

unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Does it not strengthen? "And he shall pass through the sea with affliction, and I will strengthen them in the Lord." Is it not an evidence of sonship? For "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Does it not meeten us for glory? "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." As the mighty rushing wave—canopied with the mild azure sky—decorates and beautifies the ocean, so do afflictions grace and adorn the Christian; his bosom may be racked with tempestuous trials, while his soul is enjoying the mild atmosphere of heavenly joys. Out of the bitter waters of affliction, God extracts the sweet streams of consolation; but there must be time for this:

"His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower."

The sentiment of the text may be also applied to

THE CHRISTIAN'S DEATH. Death is part of the curse, and one of the baneful effects of sin; but God turns this curse into a blessing. Go to the bed-side of the man of God, and witness his last moments; nature is sinking apace, his tongue falters, his cheek is pale, his sight dim, and the lamp of life is quivering and ready to expire; but peace is reigning in his conscience, and composure rests on his brow. "Can this be death?" the dying saint exclaims; "I see beyond the limits of the grave, the last enemy *is* destroyed, 'Surely the bitterness of death is past.'"

"How sweet the hour of closing day,
When all is peaceful and serene,
And when the sun, with cloudless ray,
Sheds mellow lustre o'er the scene!

Such is the Christian's parting hour,
So peacefully he sinks to rest;
When faith, endued from heaven with power,
Sustains and cheers his languid breast."

December 10.

HOLDING FAST WHAT WE HAVE.

"Behold, I come quickly; hold fast that which thou hast."—Rev. iii. 11.

The Christian has certain talents committed to him, of which he is not the proprietor, but the steward; and by-and-by he will be called to give in his account. In the passage before us we may notice three things:—

A possession acknowledged. "That which *thou hast.*" We have the word and doctrines of Christ, and the ordinances of religion; and if true believers, we have the impression of divine truth in the heart, and the laws of God engraven on the mind; we have saving knowledge, sincere love, evangelical repentance, unfeigned faith, and Gospel obedience.

A duty enjoined. "*Hold that fast* which thou hast;" that is, be eager and zealous in your continuance in the ways of religion. This we are to do *boldly.* We have glorious examples of this:—Moses would rather suffer persecution, Daniel would rather be cast into the lion's den, than lose what he had; the three Hebrew youths would rather expose themselves to the flames; Isaiah would rather be sawn asunder; Stephen would rather be stoned; and martyrs and confessors seal their testimony to the truth of the Gospel with their blood. But it must be done *meekly.* The meekness of the lamb must be combined with the boldness of the lion. Blind and infuriated zeal is offering strange fire to the Lord. It must be done *constantly.* Our zeal must not resemble the morning cloud and the early dew, which soon pass away, but be like the never-tiring sun, performing its course regularly.

A motive supplied. "Behold I come quickly."

The solemnity of the event. "I come." This alludes to his second advent; he shall come to reckon with his servants, to punish his enemies, and reward his friends. Should not this excite us to the performance of the duty? *The manner of his approach.* "Quickly." Nearly two thousand years have elapsed since this declaration was made. The Lord is at hand! the Judge is at the door! *The attention it demands.* "Behold!" "behold!" and act as one who shall be personally concerned in its solemnities.

December 11.

THE METHOD AND EXTENT OF SALVATION.

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."—Heb. vii. 25.

This interesting and delightful passage has been the means of encouraging many a penitent to look on him whom he has pierced, with the hope of pardon; and many a backslider to look again towards God's holy temple. Let us contemplate

The particular characters described. "Them that come unto God by him." This is a short but beautiful description of believers. What is implied in coming to God by Christ? *A belief in the existence of God.* "He that cometh to God, must believe that he is." This is at the foundation of all true religion. "If the fool should say in his heart there is no God, every pulse of that heart replies, there is; and every action of that vital organ adds, He is thy Maker." *An acknowledgment of human guilt.* The penitent sinner comes to God confessing his sins and iniquities, which have deserved the Divine wrath and indignation. *A reliance on the merits of Christ?* We come unto God *by him.* As the guilty worshipper under the Mosaic economy came before God, and sought peace and pardon through the medium of the sacrifice he presented; so the penitent sinner draws near to God, in the name of Christ, and looks for the Divine favor by virtue of the atonement of the Son of God.

The extent of the Redeemer's power. "He is able to save *to the uttermost;*" that is, *He is able to save the most notorious sinners.* Here we might allude to many recorded in Scripture, whose sins were of an aggravated nature, but who obtained mercy. *He is able to save the most aged sinners.* He can pardon, sanctify, and save, those who have lived a long life of rebellion against his righteous authority. None are so old but that they may be born again. *He is able to save to the last.* He can impart the light of grace when the flame of life is just expiring. There is the instance of the thief on the cross. "Here is *one* such instance," said Augustine, "that none might *despair*, and *only* one that none might *presume.*" It is a true but affecting remark, that death-bed repentance is, in many cases, but the flashing of the flame that is never to be

quenched, and the first gnawing of the worm that never dies. "Therefore to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

December 12.

CHRIST'S ABILITY TO SAVE.

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."—Heb. vii. 25.

THE epistle to the Hebrews is a strong and beautiful chain of argument, every link of which is so fine, and so connected, that it is not easy to consider one part without injuring the whole. The passage before us is full of encouragement to the penitent sinner: let us draw near and examine it.

THE INTERESTING FACT ASSERTED. Christ's ability to save. This implies the awful condition of mankind by nature, as sunk in sin and exposed to eternal wrath. On what does the power of Christ to save sinners rest?

The perfection of his atonement. This was prefigured in the splendid retinue of Jewish services and ceremonies; there were the various animals offered up in sacrifice according to the Divine appointment; there was the fire ascending from above to consume the offering, and this was typical of the justice of God demanding a satisfaction for sin; then there were the rolling clouds of smoke ascending towards heaven, which prefigured the acceptance of that grand atoning sacrifice presented on Calvary, which rose as incense to Jehovah of a sweet-smelling savor. But sacrifices are now done away with; the lamb is no longer led to the shrine; the sprinkling of blood is discontinued; the fire is quenched; the shechinah no longer burns, and the incense smokes no more; we can look to the actual sacrifice which has been offered up.

The perpetuity of his life. "He ever liveth." He hath an unchangeable Priesthood: he is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Hear him exclaim, with an air of majesty becoming a God, "Before Abraham was, I am." He lives to fulfil the duties of his office: he lives to represent his people; and because he lives, they shall live also.

The prevalence of his intercession. "He ever liveth *to make intercession* for them." When the Jewish priests, on the great

day of atonement, offered sacrifice, they appeared before the Lord in the holiest of all, made intercession for the people, and then went out to the multitudes, who were anxiously waiting their arrival, and blessed them in the name of the Lord. Just so did the great High Priest of our profession, when he had made an end of sin by the sacrifice of himself; he ascended up on high to the holy of holies, to make intercession for his people, and ere long he shall come again and bless them with glory, honor, and immortality. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him, shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation."

December 13.

THE BIBLE COMPARED TO A SWORD.

"The sword of the Spirit."—Eph. vi. 17.

VARIOUS figures are employed in Scripture, in setting forth the Christian life. He is compared to a racer on the course, a wrestler in the games, a mariner on the ocean, and a warrior in the field. The chapter from which this passage is selected, presents before us the spiritual panoply of the soldier of Christ. Let us notice

THE STRIKING FIGURE BY WHICH THE BIBLE IS SET FORTH. It is designated a sword. But why?

Because it penetrates into the most secret recesses of the heart. The sword is of no use while it remains in the scabbard, it must be taken out in order to do execution; and this justly applies to the Bible; it is of no use in the house, the head, or the memory, unless it is in the heart. The heart is the scabbard where the sword of the Spirit must be sheathed. "For the word of God is quick and powerful," &c. Heb. iv. 12. O what discoveries are made when the heart is opened by the Spirit; the evil thoughts and imaginations, desires and affections come to light! One single stroke of this weapon can penetrate into the very lowest depths of the soul.

Because it subdues the most inveterate enmity of the mind. This is the sword that conquers rebel man, and brings him to the foot of the cross as an humble penitent. Nothing is done to purpose, till the word enters into the heart. "The weapons

of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds," such as ignorance, prejudice, enmity, and self-righteousness. This weapon strikes at the root, and does not merely lop the branches.

Because it defends from the most powerful attacks of the enemy. Our Lord used it in his combat with Satan on the mount, and repelled his attacks with the words, "It is written." What he did, we must do. Does the enemy tempt us to disbelieve the authenticity of the Scriptures? we must exclaim, It is written, "These things are faithful and true; and we have not followed a cunningly devised fable." Does he tempt us to believe that we shall serve the Almighty for nothing? we must repel the attack, by bringing forth the Scripture testimony, "Godliness is profitable unto all things." Does he try to allure us with the world's fascinations? Let us exclaim, It is written, "Love not the world." Does he insinuate that our inward corruptions will be too strong for the gracious principle? let us say, It is written, "Sin shall not have dominion over you." Take this sword with you on all occasions, there is none like it. But let us notice

THE PECULIAR APPELLATION BY WHICH IT IS DISTINGUISHED. "The sword of the Spirit." The blade of this sword is tempered with the breath of the Spirit. Two reasons may be assigned for the appellation here given.

Because its contents were indited by the inspiration of the Spirit. The Bible bears on it the stamp and impression of Deity; it is emphatically and really "the word of God." It is not our design to defend the outworks of Christianity, for we take it for granted that you believe in the divine authenticity of Scripture. "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Because its meaning is explained by the teaching of the Spirit. Whatever conquests are obtained by this sword, he must have the honor of them, If the Bible is a hammer, he employs it to break the stony heart; if it is a nail, he fastens it in a sure place; if it is a lamp, he gives it light; if it is a fire, he makes it burn; if it is food, he gives us a relish for it; if it is a sword, he wields it.

"What glory gilds the sacred page!
Majestic, like the sun;
It gives a light to every age;
It gives, but borrows none."

December 14.

CHRIST A STAR AND SCEPTRE.

"I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh; there shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth."—Numb. xxiv. 17.

We have in the context an account of Balaam's prophecy. Balak, the king of Edom, sent to him from a great distance that he might curse Israel; but Balaam, against his will, instead of cursing, was constrained to bless them. Balak tried him several times, and took him to different places, but all to no purpose; which greatly displeased him, and he sent Balaam away; but ere he departed he delivered a prophecy concerning the advent of the Messiah, and the future glory of his Church. Let us contemplate the Saviour

In his glory. "A star." No imagery can furnish us with anything like an adequate conception of that Being who has been styled the Father of the patriarchs, the Inspirer of prophets, the Master of the apostles, the Teacher of evangelists, the crown of the martyrs, and the praise of all his saints. He is designated a star for

The light he imparts. The world was in darkness till he came as the bright and morning star. He illuminates the pages of inspiration, enlivens the gloom of solitude, dispels the dark age of folly, gilds the shadows of the grave, and irradiates the eternal world.

The direction he affords. In the waste sandy deserts of the East, where there are no mighty elevations to guide the traveller, the stars of heaven are his conductors, leading him safely to the place of his destination. Before the compass was invented, mariners took their course by the polar star. Christ is our guide through this world to the regions of glory.

The immutability he sustains. The nations of the earth pass away; one generation succeeds another, but the stars remain fixed. So it is with this star; it has been dispensing its beams for many ages, and is still immutable; it shone on our first parents in the garden; Abraham saw it and was glad, Jacob rejoiced in it, it illuminated the minds of prophets, was seen by apostles, who were directed by it in their course. It shall shine in glorious splendor when the sun is turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, and the stars fall from heaven.

December 15.

BALAAM'S PROPHECY.

"I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh; there shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth."—Numb. xxiv. 17.

This is a remarkable prediction, referring to the advent of Christ. It points us to

His office. "A sceptre shall rise out of Israel." Here let us contemplate him

As a Shepherd. The sceptre may allude to a rod in the hand of a shepherd; it is the image of his pastoral character. Christ is the good Shepherd, and his people are the sheep of his pasture. As a Shepherd he knows his sheep, thinks on them, watches over them, feeds them, defends them, and restores them when they wander.

As a King. A sceptre is an ensign of regal authority in the hand of kings; the sceptre of Christ is a sceptre of power, equity, righteousness, love, and mercy.

His conquests. "And shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth." These prophecies had their accomplishment in the conquests obtained over the Moabites and Edomites in the days of Ehud, Gideon, and Jephthah; but they have a reference to the victories of Christ over heathen nations. Christ, by the preaching of his Gospel, and the power of his Spirit, shall overcome pagan superstition, Mohammedan delusion, and infidel skepticism. The word here translated "destroy" signifies to unwall, and may allude to the taking away of prejudices against Christianity, and the removal of ignorance from the mind—he shall destroy their hatred to the truths of the Gospel, and subdue them by the power of his grace.

His advent. "I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh." This refers to the long period that should intervene before Christ's coming, which was 1452 years. Balaam saw him in vision, but not nigh; it was as if he had said, The time is coming when I shall see him on his throne, surrounded with his holy angels, and ten thousand of his saints; but though I shall see him, I shall not be nigh to him; I shall see the sword of his vengeance, and the frown of his anger. Ah! how many have to say with Balaam, "I shall behold him, but not nigh!" There are multitudes that now pass for pious persons,

who yet have to exclaim, "I shall behold him, but not nigh;" not as my Redeemer, my Advocate, my Deliverer, and my all. Do you see him now? Do you behold him nigh? Do you see him, so as to believe in him, love him, follow him, and commune with him? Oh, the awful misery of seeing Christ afar off! Keep your attention fixed on this star. Do you sorrow for sin? Look to it, and its beams will fall on a promise of pardon. Are you in affliction and distress? Look to it, and its beams will fall on a promise of comfort. Do you mourn over bereaving dispensations of Providence? Look to it, and its beams will fall on that declaration, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." When surrounded by the gloom of the sepulchre, look to it, and its beams will fall on that sweet assurance, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

December 16.

HEARING THE VOICE OF GOD.

"I will hear what God the Lord will speak."—Psalm lxxxv. 8.

The whole verse from which this passage is selected, presents us with three things—a wise resolution, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak"—a pleasing assurance, "for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints"—and a seasonable admonition, "but let them not turn again to folly." We inquire

What does God speak?

He speaks in creation, and we should admire. The grass of the field, the trees of the forest, the flowers of the garden, hills and valleys, rocks and mountains, the mighty cataract, the flowing river, and the running stream, earth, air, and sea,

> "The spacious firmament on high,
> With all the blue, ethereal sky,"

sun, moon, and stars, those glorious orbs of light, are vocal with Jehovah's praise.

He speaks in providence, and we should adore. How de-

lightful is the truth, "Our times are in his hands!" and how desirable the feeling, "Let him do with me as seemeth him good!" Christians, we are on the mighty waters, tossed with wave upon wave, but our Father is at the helm; we have a wise pilot, who will land us safe on Canaan's peaceful shores.

He speaks in the Gospel, and we should hear. How few visit the house of God with this impression fixed on the mind! But what does he speak? Peace to his people, terror to his enemies, and encouragement to the penitent.

How should we hear. It is God that speaks, and therefore we should hear *with attention.* God speaks to us, therefore we should hear *with self-application.* We are too prone to hear for others instead of ourselves. I recollect the remark of a Welsh preacher, now in glory, It is a good thing when the sermon makes the hearer go home quarrelling with himself. God speaks to us for our benefit, therefore we should hear *with prayer.* He will not always speak, and therefore we should hear *without delay.* God speaks once, yea, even twice; we have line upon line, and precept upon precept. The fire is not always brought out of the flint the first time it is struck; nor are spiritual affections kindled under the first entreaties of the Gospel. Defer not the consideration of divine things to a future season.

December 17.

THE VINEYARD.

"Son, go work to-day in my vineyard."—Matt. xxi. 28.

These words form part of one of the parables of our Lord delivered to the chief priests and elders in the temple, which is recorded from the 28th to the 32d verse. We may here observe

The scene of labor. "My vineyard." By the sin of Adam, says Henry, we are turned out to work upon the common; but, by the grace of our Lord Jesus, we are called to work again in the vineyard. There is a vineyard in which every man should work. That vineyard is our own heart; you must begin here, labor to improve your gifts and graces, cultivate those tempers and dispositions which are in accordance

with, and which will shed a lustre on the Gospel you profess. Then there is the family, the religious society with which you are connected, the neighborhood in which you live, and the world at large.

THE DIVINE COMMAND. "Son, go work." You are not to visit the vineyard as an idle spectator, but as an active laborer. It includes

A diligent attention to your own personal salvation. How inconsistent to appear zealous for the conversion of others around us, while we are yet in our sins! It is a sad reflection, "They made me keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept."

An active exertion for the spiritual interests of others. "Go work;" instruct the ignorant, warn the careless, direct the inquirer; and let all be done with prayer, diligence, perseverance, and in hope of success.

THE PERIOD OF EXERTION. "To-day." This is the language of the Gospel; the command is urgent, and the obedience must be prompt, because the work is important, the scene is extensive, the time is short, life is uncertain, our responsibility is great, the Judge is even at the door, and present facilities may soon be withdrawn; the lamp of life may shortly be extinguished, or the candlestick of the Gospel removed out of its place. Time is one thing, opportunity is another; the cage of time may remain, while the bird of opportunity has flown.

December 18.

CHRIST OUR LEADER.

"A leader."—Isa. lv. 4.

IN the verse from which these words are selected, Christ is represented in a threefold capacity: as a Witness to bear testimony to the truth, a Leader to guide us into it, and a Commander to rule and govern us by his power. Let us contemplate him as a Leader.

WHOM DOES HE LEAD? He is said to be given to "the people;" that is, those who are called by his grace and sanctified by his Spirit, a chosen, holy, honorable, happy, wise, willing, and obedient people;—a people who have yielded them-

selves to his government, and consecrated themselves to his glory.

WHERE DOES HE LEAD? With respect to the way in which Christ leads his people, the Scriptures furnish us with abundant information. It is a right way, the way of truth and of wisdom; a peaceful way, for all who travel in it have peace with God, and peace of conscience; a peculiar way, as it differs from the course of this world; a narrow way, in which there are but comparatively few found; a pleasant way, where communion with God is enjoyed, and the happiness of heaven is anticipated; it is the good old way, in which the redeemed in glory have walked, but it is a way that is evil spoken of by the enemy.

HOW DOES HE LEAD? Numerous and diversified are his qualifications as a Leader. He leads effectually—by his grace he leads, and by his power he keeps them in the way; wisely and in a right manner: kindly, gently, and safely.

TO WHAT DOES HE LEAD? To the high and dignified state to which believers are destined. He leads them to glory, honor, and renown; to a Father's house, a land of rest, a rich and incorruptible inheritance, to the best of society, to those blissful regions

> "Where our best friends and kindred dwell,
> Where God our Sovereign reigns."

December 19.

BELIEVERS BORNE ON EAGLES' WINGS.

"Ye have seen how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself." Exod. xix. 4.

THIS is a most touching and sublime description of the divine goodness towards the Israelites. It is almost impossible to carry out the boldness and grandeur of the comparison. See Deut. xxxii. 10–12. The text contains two things.

A FIGURATIVE ILLUSTRATION OF AN IMPORTANT WORK. We may apply it to three things in the history of the Christian. *To the period of conversion.* Then God bears sinners on eagles' wings, and brings them to himself. He stirs up the nest of self-righteousness and carnal security; flutters over them, excites

and teaches them to fly towards heaven in their desires and affections. It will also apply *to the season of deliverance.* So it is employed in the passage before us; and is descriptive of the speed with which God comes to the help of his people, and the security he effects; for the eagle is not only a swift but a powerful bird. Other birds carry their young in their talons, but the eagle bears them on her wings; so that, if the archer would shoot them, he must pierce through her first. *It will apply to their final happiness.* He will bear his people on eagles' wings to heaven. It may be he may bear them through many a dark and trying scene; but they shall be brought to glory at last. "Nothing is promised us here with certainty as followers of Christ, but a cross on our shoulders; and that he will bear us on eagles' wings—and he does bear us! But this eagle does not always soar through bright sunbeams and blue heavens, with his beloved resting on his pinions: through the storm and tempest also he holds his bold career. Yet if he does but carry us! 'The Breaker is his name;' upwards ascends his path; and he will never drop us from his wings, until the palm-trees of everlasting peace rustle around our heads." Here is

A TOUCHING APPEAL AS TO THE PERFORMANCE OF THIS WORK. Christian, you have seen what he did in the period of conversion—acknowledge it. You have seen what he has done in the season of deliverance—praise him. You have heard what he has promised to do in reference to your final glory—trust him. Let ministers, teachers, parents, and all who have the instruction of others, bear in mind this lovely image.

December 20.

PASSING OVER JORDAN.

"For ye shall pass over Jordan to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God giveth you, and ye shall possess it, and dwell therein."—Deut. xi. 31.

THE history of the Israelites in the wilderness affords a striking type of the Christian pilgrim's journey through this desert world to the heavenly Canaan. Note

THE ANTICIPATED INHERITANCE. "The land which the Lord your God giveth you." No country mentioned in Scripture is

connected with such interesting associations as the land of Canaan. Wherein was it typical of heaven? *It was a land of promise.* God promised it to the children of Israel for a possession, as far back as Abraham. "Unto thy seed will I give this land." So heaven is promised as the Christian's home. *It was a land of abundance;* Deut. xi. 9–11. Ezekiel calls it the glory of all lands, and David speaks of it as a pleasant land. In heaven there is a fulness of joy, and abundance of spiritual provisions. *It was a land of rest;* Deut. xii. 9. Earth is the scene for labor, but heaven a place of rest. *It was a holy land;* Zech. ii. 12. Heaven is holy in its inhabitants, pleasures, worship, and employments. In earthly portions, the greater number there is to participate, the less proportion does each one possess; but the Christian's inheritance resembles the light of the sun: though millions are benefited by it, each may call it his own, as if there were none to enjoy it but himself.

THE MANNER OF POSSESSION. The introduction of the Israelites to it is ascribed to the sovereign mercy of God; Deut. ix. 4–6. Christian, it is "the land which the Lord your God giveth you." But when are you to enter it, and by what way? "Ye shall *pass over* Jordan." The streams of Jordan rolled between the desert and the land of Canaan; so the river of death flows between the seen and unseen world. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."

THE CHARACTERS ALLUDED TO. Are you not ready to say with Abraham, "Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" Unbelievers cannot; the unholy and unprepared cannot. It is for those who are called by God's grace, sanctified by his Spirit, and devoted to his glory. You must pass over Jordan, whatever be your character; but the question is, On what shore will you land? Prepare to meet thy God!

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
Hold me with thy powerful hand:
Bread of heaven,
Feed me till I want no more.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Bear me through the swelling current;
Land me safe on Canaan's side:
Songs of praises
I will ever give to thee.

December 21.

THE SAVIOUR'S ANNOUNCEMENT.

"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen."—Rev. xxii. 20.

THESE words are placed at the close of the canon of inspiration, and have a reference to one of the most solemn events of which we can possibly conceive, and one in which all are personally concerned. Let us observe

THE SAVIOUR'S ANNOUNCEMENT. This is the third time in the course of the chapter that Christ solemnly announces his coming. The two great advents of the Saviour, spoken of in the New Testament, are his coming in the destruction of Jerusalem, and his coming to the general judgment. The first is already past, the other is yet to come; and concerning this he speaks in the passage before us. Three things may be remarked with regard to it.

Its designs. These are of the most important nature. He shall come to vindicate his character and government, to display his glory, to summon all mankind to his tribunal to surrender their final account to him, and to pass and execute just and righteous sentences on all.

Its certainty. Reason teaches us, that such a period of universal scrutiny and examination must arrive; but we have a more sure word of prophecy; revelation affirms it; the faithful and true witness declares it. "*Surely* I come quickly."

Its period. "*Quickly.*" The infidel and the sceptic are ready to say, Ah, it is nearly two thousand years since he made the announcement, and he has not come yet! where is the sign of his coming? But do they not know that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day? They need not complain of his delay: perhaps the Judge will come too soon for them, before they are prepared to meet him.

"See, the Lord appears in view;
Heaven and earth before him fly:
Rise, ye saints, he comes for you;
Rise to meet him in the sky."

December 22.

THE CHRISTIAN'S RESPONSE.

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus."—Rev. xxii. 20.

While revelation presents Jesus to our view as the friend of sinners, in the attitude of entreaty, it invests him with the robes of glory and majesty, as the Judge of quick and dead, and points us to a great day of universal retribution. While the wicked shall dread his coming, the righteous shall hail his approach. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Notice

The Christian's response. This is the language of

Lively faith. Not the faith that is dead, being alone; not the faith of the formalist, but that which is vital, evangelical, which works by love, and purifies the heart.

Confident expectation. He who knows in whom he has believed, and, from his own experience and the witness of the Spirit, is sure that he is interested in the Saviour, may adopt this language. According to the divine promise, he is "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

Earnest desire. Christians not only look, but long, for the coming of Christ; therefore they are spoken of as those that love his appearing. They desire it, because then they shall be like him, and see him as he is.

Patient acquiescence. Thus they are waiting and watching for him. They have not, or ought not to have, such a desire to depart, as to render them unfit for present duties, or impatient under trials; their language is, Come, Lord Jesus, in thine own time, and in thine own way. Seeing we look for such things, what manner of persons ought we to be! How humble, prayerful, devout, holy, serious, and watchful! Christians, we shall then have a key to unlock the mysteries of his providence; let us therefore suspend our judgment. The beauty of a thing, says one, appears at the moment of its maturity, which God waits for. He that tastes the blossom, instead of the fruit, will pass a wrong judgment upon it; he that would limit his idea of the beauties of vegetation, to their appearance in the winter season, would judge very blindly. Wait, therefore, and see the end of the Lord.

December 23.

CHRIST OUR DAYSPRING.

"Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."—Luke i. 78, 79.

THREE things are here presented to our view in reference to the advent of Christ.

ITS NECESSITY. This is proved from the affecting and awful condition of mankind by sin. *It is a state of darkness.* The Jews lived under a comparatively dark dispensation, and all other nations were sunk into a state of pagan ignorance and superstition. But Christ is denominated the light of the world. The dayspring signifies the dawn or first rays of the sun rising in majestic grandeur in the eastern skies. *It is a state of death.* Sinners are dead in trespasses and sins, dead to the knowledge of God, the love of Christ, and the grace of the Spirit. *It is a state of error.* Therefore it is said, he came to guide our feet. We all, like sheep, have gone astray; we have wandered far from God, happiness, holiness, and heaven. *It is a state of enmity.* Therefore Jesus guides us into the way of *peace.*

ITS DESIGN. This is fourfold, and exactly meets the case of poor perishing sinners. Is our natural state one of darkness? He is the dayspring from on high, to dispel the mists of superstition, and remove the clouds of ignorance that gathered around the children of men. Is our natural state one of death? He imparts spiritual life in the work of grace, and eternal life in the realms of glory. Is our natural state one of error? He guides our feet. Is it one of enmity? He leads us into peace.

ITS SOURCE. "Through the tender mercy of our God." Observe

His endearing character. "Our God." He is so in Christ. Here we have God in our nature, and God on our side; our God under the most interesting relations.

The attribute ascribed to him. "Tender mercy." The mercy of God is seen in every link of the chain of our salvation—but notice the quality of this attribute, "*tender* mercy." This is expressive, and signifies the yearning compassion of a fond parent. Let us inquire whether this dayspring from on high has visited us, whether the first beams of the Sun of righteousness have darted on our souls.

December 24.

THE ALTOGETHER LOVELY.

"He is altogether lovely."—Sol. Song, v. 16.

This is spoken of Christ, for there is none other to whom the language is applicable; while creatures have their excellences, they have also their imperfections, but not so with him: they are to be admired for some things, and censured for others; there are spots in the sun, but none in the Sun of righteousness; "he is altogether lovely." Let us, in a few words, prove and then improve the subject.

Let us prove it. And where shall we gather our evidence? Ye shining hosts of angels that encircle the throne on which he sits in dazzling brightness on high, tell us your thoughts of him while ye celebrate his praise and sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." Spirits of the departed just, ye now see him in his glory, what do ye say of him? Behold they cast their crowns at his feet, and cry, "Thou art worthy; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." Patriarchs, prophets, disciples, apostles, martyrs, confessors, and reformers, all speak of his glory, and tell of his grace. What a mass of evidence is there in the Bible, and in the experience of believers in every age, to prove that "he is altogether lovely!" Is high birth a recommendation? He is God's first-born, higher than the kings of the earth. Is wisdom an excellence? "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Is holiness to be desired? He is the Holy One of God. Is faithfulness a recommendation? He is the faithful and true witness. Is wealth desirable? He is heir of all things. Is love a recommendation? The love of Christ passeth knowledge. Is gentleness pleasing? He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. Is beauty an excellence? he is fairer than the children of men; he is the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valley; he is the chiefest among ten thousand, yea, he is altogether lovely.

Let us improve it. Is the Saviour altogether lovely, and does he possess such an endless variety of excellences? Then let us admire him; let him reign supreme in our hearts; let him have the throne in our affections, and all creatures but the

footstool. Let us exercise confidence in him, and exemplify devotedness to him.

December 25.

THE CHILD JESUS.

"The child Jesus."—Luke ii. 43.

To the contemplation of this lofty subject we are naturally led by the return of this annual season, commonly called Christmas Day. Let us, then, behold in the child Jesus

An object of wonder. Were all the angels of heaven transformed into the most insignificant insects, this would be a mystery; but it would bear no comparison with the amazing fact of God manifest in the flesh. Think of the everlasting Father becoming a little child; he who thunders in the heavens, weeping in the manger; he who is clothed with light as a garment, wrapt in swaddling clothes. Let us go to Bethlehem, and see the child Jesus.

An object of joy. Rejoice in him as the mercy promised to the Fathers, the Seed of the woman, Jacob's Shiloh, Isaiah's Immanuel, Jeremiah's King, Ezekiel's Shepherd, Daniel's Son of Man, Zechariah's Branch, Micah's Ruler of Israel, Haggai's Desire of all Nations, Malachi's Angel of the Covenant, Abraham's Sacrifice, Noah's Ark, Jacob's Ladder, Moses' Brazen Serpent, Solomon's Temple, the Foundation-stone in the building of mercy, the brightest Jewel in the cabinet of truth, the Pearl of great price in the field of Scripture, the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley in the garden of the Church, the Sun of righteousness in the firmament of revelation—rejoice in the wonders of his incarnation, the holiness of his life, the efficacy of his death, the sufficiency of his atonement, the prevalence of his intercession, and the triumph of his grace.

An object of love. Everything connected with the Saviour should excite our admiration, and call forth our esteem. His infinite dignity, his Mediatorial excellences, his glorious undertaking, and his unparalleled sufferings, all demand our love; and, if we withhold it, the very stones will cry out against us.

An object of faith. We are called upon to look at "the

child Jesus," not as unconcerned spectators, but as those who are, or desire to be, interested in the delightful scene.

December 26.

SIMEON'S RESIGNATION.

"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word." Luke ii. 29.

Simeon waited for the consolation of Israel, that is, for the advent of the promised Messiah; and he did not wait in vain: he saw the Lord's Christ, and embracing him, both in the arms of his faith and his flesh, he blessed God, and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word." It is said of some of the Turks, that, when they have seen the tomb of Mohammed, they put out their eyes, that they may never defile them again by viewing earthly objects; this they do from a blind and superstitious regard to the false prophet; but good old Simeon did not desire to see any more of this world, after he had witnessed the Divine Redeemer.

We have in this passage a farewell to life, and a welcome to death. Let us dwell a little on three topics.

The Christian's character. He is a servant of God. This was not always the case. In the period of conversion, he renounced the service of sin and Satan, and yielded himself to him who is the best of Masters. The service he renders has various properties, which we may just allude to:—it is a spiritual, loving, believing, evangelical, voluntary, and impartial service.

The Christian's death. It is here represented as a departure in peace. Observe

Its nature. A departure: so Paul speaks of it. Death is the departure of the soul from the body; it loosens the silver cord that unites them both; it is a departure from sorrow to joy, from warfare to victory, from the partial to the full enjoyment of God, from a barren wilderness to a fruitful Paradise, from a dark and dreary night to a bright and glorious day.

Its manner. It is a departure *in peace.* This includes all peace—peace with God, peace of conscience, peace with our fellow-Christians, and our enemies, yea, peace with death itself.

THE CHRISTIAN'S RESIGNATION. "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word;"—as if he had said, Now I have seen and embraced the Saviour, thou dost let me depart in peace; I can die happy. This implies an assurance of preparation for death, a wish for release from sin and sorrow, and a desire to be with Christ.

December 27.

THE DIVINE APPOINTMENT OF CHRIST.

"God sent him to bless you."—Acts iii. 26.

THIS is spoken of our Lord Jesus Christ; and two things may be here remarked concerning him.

HIS HIGH AUTHORITY. "God sent him." This includes

His appointment to his work. He was employed as the Father's servant, in his Mediatorial capacity, to perform his will and to fulfil his purpose. Under this character he often spake of himself, as having come out from, and been sent by, the Father. But it also denotes

His anointing for his work. He is said to be anointed of the Holy Spirit, in allusion to the custom of the setting apart of the ancient prophets, priests, and kings to their office, by the pouring of oil on their heads.

HIS BENEVOLENT DESIGN. "To bless you." Behold here a miracle of mercy, and a prodigy of love. He came not to smite the earth with a curse, but to visit it with a blessing; not to enslave, but to redeem; not to wage war, but to make peace; and now, instead of thunderbolts of vengeance being hurled, instead of the angry storm of Jehovah's wrath bursting on our guilty heads, and drowning us in eternal perdition, the waters are assuaged, the clouds that gathered so thickly around us are scattered, our sky is clear and bright, and there is seen, flying in the firmament of the Gospel, the dove with the olive branch of peace, and the song is heard chanted by the angelic choir, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good-will toward men." The blessings which Jesus confers are divine in their origin, suitable in their nature, free in their bestowment, and eternal in their duration. Did God send the

Saviour? then let us acknowledge him; did he send him to bless us? then let us bless him, and receive him as all our salvation, and all our desire.

"The Saviour! oh! what endless charms
Dwell in that blissful sound!
Its influence every fear disarms,
And spreads delight around."

December 28.

JOB'S ESTIMATE OF LIFE.

"I would not live alway."—Job vii. 16.

When the venerable patriarch, whose brow was covered with the snow of age, stood before the Egyptian monarch, he said, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage," Gen. xlvii. 9. David said, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away and be at rest," Psalm lv. 6. Paul had a desire to depart, and be with Christ, which is far better. And Job in this passage exclaims, "I would not live alway." When the Christian adopts this language, he does not mean to manifest an indisposition to the duties of life, or a murmuring spirit under the trials of life. There are many reasons why he would not live alway. He would not

When he refers to the body. What a clog is it to the operations of the soul! How it binds us down to earth! In the heavenly state, the properties of the body as well as the faculties of the soul, will be sanctified by the purity and grace of Christ, and rendered fit for his service, Phil. iii. 20, 21. Then every faculty, energy, and power, shall move in submission to the Divine will.

When he contemplates the soul. Whether we ascribe it to the influence of the body on the soul, or any other cause, it is too evident that not one faculty of the soul is directed completely to the great object of its being. Here we see the fruits and effects of sin: the understanding is dark, the affections unholy, the memory forgetful. What a contrast to the state of the believer in glory! He would not live alway.

Because of his absence from Christ. "Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." It is true, his presence is felt and enjoyed here in the exercises of religion, but only partially; we can gain at best but a very imperfect view of his glories; the full vision is reserved for the period when we shall be called home. We are not fully satisfied; we want to experience more of his grace and love; more of the comforts of his Spirit. He would not live alway,

Because of the imperfection of his knowledge. "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part." How little do we know of the sublime truths of revelation! of the being and perfections of God! of the mysterious union of the two natures of Christ! of the plenitude of his grace, and the unrivalled splendor of his glory! When, therefore, the Christian contrasts his present ignorance with his future knowledge, he is induced to exclaim, "I would not live alway."

Because of the happiness of heaven. Who would live alway, when beyond the grave is a paradise of joy? Who would live alway, when "there remaineth a rest to the people of God?" Who would prefer the first-fruits to the full harvest, the drop to the shower, the streams to the ocean, the earnest to full possession? How different is the language of the worldling! If he had his choice, he would make this world his rest and his home forever. We must not live alway on earth, whether we desire it or not; but we must live alway, either in heaven or hell.

December 29.

THE FAITHFUL SERVANT.

"Blessed is that servant whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing." Matt. xxiv. 46.

In the chapter from which these words are selected, two grand and solemn events are noticed; the destruction of Jerusalem, with all the awful signs that preceded it; that is past—and the second advent of the Saviour; that is to come. Let us contemplate

The event anticipated. The coming of our Lord to judgment. This shall be preceded by the universal spread of Divine truth. We look forward to a day when the powers of

darkness shall be destroyed, and the fetters of superstition shall be broken; when peace shall universally prevail, and wars and fightings cease; and the hopes we thus cherish are not the delusions of a disordered imagination; we know him that hath said, "All nations shall serve him." His coming to judgment shall be with solemn grandeur. He shall come as a conqueror, triumphing over sin, death, and hell; the clouds shall be his chariot, and the archangel his herald to announce his approach. It shall be universal. "Every eye shall see him;" the fact of his coming is sure, though the period is uncertain.

THE CONDUCT APPLAUDED. "So doing." This refers to verse 45, where the Christian is represented as a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season. This conduct includes *a diligent attention to our own spiritual concerns.* This is of the highest importance; and we cannot be too strict in our investigation of the real and actual state of our souls before God. Perhaps we have long made a profession of religion; it becomes us to inquire as to what we possess; where is our faith, love, hope, heavenly-mindedness, and other Christian graces? *An anxiety for the welfare of others.* We are not to ask, "Am I my brother's keeper?" but to do good to all as we have opportunity. Religion teaches the truest and purest philanthropy. *Zeal for the glory of God.* If the fire of divine love is kindled in the breast, the flames of Christian zeal will be seen issuing in all directions. Our motto should be, "Do all to the glory of God." *The happiness secured.* This is evidently involved in the blessing pronounced, "Blessed is that servant;" he is blessed with all spiritual blessings in life and death, in time and eternity. This happiness includes an interest in the divine protection, a share in the divine approbation, and the eternal enjoyment of the divine presence in heaven.

December 30.

THE BRIDEGROOM'S APPROACH.

"Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him."—Matt. xxv. 6.

This is part of the parable of the ten virgins. By the five wise virgins we are to understand true Christians, who not only have the lamp of profession, but the oil of grace: by the five foolish virgins are meant mere professors of religion, who have the lamp of profession in the hand, but are destitute of the oil of grace. There is a beautiful allusion in the parable before us to a known custom of the Jews; on a marriage solemnity, the bridegroom, attended by his friends, came at a late hour of the night to the house of the bride, who was in expectation of his approach, surrounded with her bridesmaids, who, upon notice being given of the bridegroom's approach, were to go out with lamps in their hands to light him to the house. "While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept; and at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." We may apply these words to useful and instructive reflections. Observe then,

The event announced. "The bridegroom cometh."

He comes in the ministry of the Gospel. He comes to call sinners by his grace, adopt them into his family, justify their persons, renew their nature, sanctify the heart, and confer grace and glory.

He comes at death and judgment. When the Son of man shall come to judge the world in righteousness, what a solemn period will it be! All flesh shall be ushered into his presence. Then shall we behold our God in grandeur, and our world on fire.

The command issued. "Go ye out to meet him." This supposes that there is a distance between us and God, and that he is ready to come and meet us. Thus it is said, "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness." How are we to go out and meet him?

By reading the Scriptures. Read them with reverence and godly fear, with a teachable and childlike spirit, and with a prayerful dependence on the aid of the Spirit. *By hearing his word.* The sanctuary is the place where God has appointed and promised to meet you. *By sacred meditation.* Some of

the most delightful interviews the believer has with Jesus are obtained in the secret of retirement. *By prayer.* As God promised to meet and commune with the Israelites at the mercy-seat, so he now engages to meet us in Christ, our propitiatory. What multitudes have met him at the throne of grace! *At the sacramental table.* Here he is made known in breaking of bread; here believers have humbling views of themselves, and exalted views of Christ, and are led to exclaim, on a review of such delightful seasons of meeting, "He brought me into his banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love."

THE ATTENTION DEMANDED. "Behold;" but with what feelings and sentiments is it to be? Behold and wonder; behold and believe; behold and prepare; behold and rejoice.

December 31.

THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR.

"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever."—Heb. xiii. 8.

The year rolls round, and steals away
The breath that first it gave;
Whate'er we do, where'er we be,
We're travelling to the grave.

BY the providential care and kindness of God we are brought to the last day of another year; and, while take a retrospect of the scenes and circumstances through which we have passed, we are reminded of favors received, deliverances obtained, mercies slighted, and privileges abused. Many who commenced the year with us are now in the silent mansions of the grave; but time is leaning on his scythe, and waiting to converse with us a little longer. It is winter; and amid the dreariness I behold around me, let me, ere I close my meditations for the year, glance an eye at the unfading wreaths of flowers which are to be found adorning the Christian Temple. "No virtue is here missing—whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, and virtuous, here you behold them all. Humility sheds the sweetness of her violet odors; the passion-flower of endurance mingles itself with the sun-flower of faith; from the lily chalice of heavenly-mindedness rises the sweet smell of every good deed, in which the left hand knows not what the right

hand doeth. Behold a rich, an ever-blooming garland from God's garden, moistened with heavenly dew, and bound together with charity the bond of perfectness." While the rapid tide is bearing us to the ocean of eternity, and the sons of men, one after another, are passing away, we cannot close the year in a more suitable manner than by fixing our attention on the Rock of Ages, which, amidst every changing scene, remains immutable—"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever." He is the same in the glory of his person, the perfections of his character, the riches of his grace, the resources of his power, the treasures of his wisdom, the purposes of his love, the promises of his word, and the blessings of his covenant. Then let us go to him at all times, and exercise implicit confidence in him; and now, standing as it were on the threshold of another year, and not knowing what a day may bring forth, or how soon the silver cord which unites the body and soul may be loosed, let us seriously and solemnly commend ourselves to the care of that Divine Being who has crowned the year with his goodness, and earnestly pray that, when the last day of life shall arrive, we may be prepared to enter upon a state of immortal bliss.

SWIFTNESS OF TIME.

How swift, alas! the moments fly!
  How rush the years along!
Scarce here, yet gone already by—
  The burden of a song.

See childhood, youth, and manhood pass,
  And age, with furrowed brow;
Time was—time shall be—but, alas!
  Where, where in time is now?

Time is the measure but of change;
  No present hour is found;
The past, the future, fill the range
  Of time's unceasing round.

Where, then, is now? In realms above,
  With God's atoning Lamb,
In regions of eternal love,
  Where sits enthroned I AM.

Then, pilgrim, let thy joys and fears
On time no longer lean;
But henceforth all thy hopes and fears
From earth's affections wean.

To God let grateful accents rise;
With truth, with virtue, live;
So all the bliss that time denies
Eternity shall give.

THE END.

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